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THE WORKS OF JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

VOL. IV

THE POEMS AND PROSE
SKETCHES OF
JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

PIPES O' PAN AT ZEKESBURY

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S
SONS · NEW YORK · 1913

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TO
MY BROTHER
JOHN A. RILEY
WITH MANY MEMORIES
OF THE OLD
HOME

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AT ZEKESBURY

The Pipes of Pan! Not idler now are they
Than when their cunning fashioner first blew
The pith of music from them: Yet for you
And me their notes are blown in many a way
Lost in our murmurings for that old day
That fared so well without us.—Waken to
The pipings here at hand:—The clear halloo
Of truant-voices, and the roundelay
The waters warble in the solitude
Of blooming thickets, where the robin's breast
Sends up such ecstasy o'er dale and dell,
Each tree-top answers, till in all the wood
There lingers not one squirrel in his nest
Whetting his hunger on an empty shell.

AT ZEKESBURY

THE little town, as I recall it, was of just enough dignity and dearth of the same to be an ordinary county-seat in Indiana—"The Grand Old Hoosier State," as it was used to being howlingly referred to by the forensic stump orator from the old stand in the court-house yard—a political campaign being the wildest delight that Zekesbury might ever hope to call its own.

Through years the fitful happenings of the town and its vicinity went on the same—the same! Annually about one circus ventured in, and vanished, and was gone, even as a passing trumpet-blast; the usual rainy season swelled the "Crick," the driftage choking at "the covered bridge," and backing water till the old road looked amphibious; and crowds of curious townsfolk straggled down to look upon the watery wonder, and lean awe-struck above it, and spit in it, and turn mutely home again.

With a mechanical—almost a bored air—Fate went on

compounding the usual formula of incidents peculiar to an uneventful town and its vicinity: The countryman from "Jessup's Crossing," with the cornstalk coffin-measure, loped into town, his steaming little gray-and-red-flecked "roadster" gurgitating, as it were, with that mysterious utterance that ever has commanded and ever must evoke the wonder and bewilderment of every boy; the smallpox rumor became prevalent betimes, and the subtle aroma of the assafœtida-bag permeated the graded schools "from turret to foundation-stone"; the still recurring exposé of the Poorhouse management; the farm-hand, with the scythe across his shoulder, struck dead by lightning; the long-drawn quarrel between the rival editors, culminating in one of them assaulting the other with a "sidestick," and the other kicking the one down-stairs and thenceward *ad libitum;* the tramp, supposititiously stealing a ride, found dead on the railroad; the grand jury returning a sensational indictment against a bartender *non est;* the Temperance outbreak; the "Revival"; the Church Festival; and the "Free Lectures on Phrenology, and Marvels of Mesmerism," at the town hall. It was during the time of the last-mentioned sensation, and directly through this scientific investigation, that I came upon two of the town's most remarkable characters. And however meagre my outline of them may prove, my material for

the sketch is most accurate in every detail, and no deviation from the cold facts of the case shall influence any line of my report.

For some years prior to this odd experience I had been connected with a daily paper at the State capital; and latterly a prolonged session of the legislature, where I specially reported, having told threateningly upon my health, I took both the advantage of a brief vacation and the invitation of a young bachelor Senator, to get out of the city for a while, and bask my respiratory organs in the revivifying rural air of Zekesbury—the home of my new friend.

"It'll pay you to get out here," he said, cordially, meeting me at the little station, "and I'm glad you've come, for you'll find no end of odd characters to amuse you." And under the very pleasant sponsorship of my senatorial friend, I was placed at once on genial terms with half the citizens of the little town—from the shirt-sleeved nabob of the county office to the droll wag of the favorite loafing-place; the rules and by-laws of which resort, by the way, being rudely charcoaled on the wall above the cutter's bench, and somewhat artistically culminating in an original dialectic legend which ran thus:

"F'rinstance, now whare *some* folks gits
To relyin' on their wits,

Ten to one they git too smart,
And spile it all right at the start!—
Feller wants to jes go slow
And do his *thinkin'* first, you know:—
Ef I can't think up somepin' good,
I set still and chaw my cood!"

And it was at this inviting rendezvous, two or three evenings following my arrival, that the general crowd, acting upon the random proposition of one of the boys, rose as a man and wended its hilarious way to the town hall.

"Phrenology," said the little, old, bald-headed lecturer and mesmerist, thumbing the egg-shaped head of a young man I remembered to have met that afternoon in some law office—"phrenology," repeated the Professor—"or rather the *term* 'phrenology'—is derived from two Greek words signifying *mind* and *discourse;* hence we find embodied in phrenology proper the science of intellectual measurement, together with the capacity of intelligent communication of the varying mental forces and their flexibilities, etc., etc. The study, then, of phrenology is, to wholly simplify it—is, I say, the general contemplation of the workings of the mind as made manifest through the certain corresponding depressions and protuberances of the human skull, when, of course, in a healthy state

of action and development, as we here find the conditions exemplified in the subject before us."

Here the "subject" vaguely smiled.

"You recognize that mug, don't you?" whispered my friend. "It's that coruscating young ass, you know, Hedrick—in Cummings's office—trying to study law and literature at the same time, and tampering with 'The Monster that Annually,' don't you know?—where we found the two young students scuffling round the office, and smelling of peppermint?—Hedrick, you know, and Sweeney. Sweeney, the slim chap, with the pallid face, and frog-eyes, and clammy hands! You remember I told you 'there was a pair of 'em'? Well, they're up to something here to-night. Hedrick, there on the stage in front; and Sweeney—don't you see?—with the gang on the rear seats."

"Phrenology—again," continued the lecturer, "is, we may say, a species of mental geography, as it were; which—by a study of the skull—leads also to a study of the brain within, even as geology naturally follows the initial contemplation of the earth's surface. The brain, thurfur, or intellectual retort, as we may say, natively exerts a moulding influence on the skull contour; thurfur is the expert in phrenology most readily enabled to accurately locate the multitudinous intellectual forces, and

most exactingly estimate, as well, the sequent character of each subject submitted to his scrutiny. As in the example before us—a young man, doubtless well known in your midst, though, I may say, an entire stranger to myself—I venture to disclose some characteristic trends and tendencies indicated by this phrenological depression and development of the skull proper, and later we will show, through the mesmeric condition, the accuracy of our mental diagnosis."

Throughout the latter part of this speech my friend nudged me spasmodically, whispering something which was jostled out of intelligent utterance by some inward spasm of laughter.

"In this head," said the Professor, straddling his malleable fingers across the young man's bumpy brow—"in this head we find Ideality large—abnormally large, in fact; thurby indicating—taken in conjunction with a like development of the perceptive qualities—language following, as well, in the prominent eye—thurby indicating, I say, our subject as especially endowed with a love for the beautiful—the sublime—the elevating—the refined and delicate—the lofty and superb—in nature, and in all the sublimated attributes of the human heart and beatific soul. In fact, we find this young man possessed of such natural gifts as would befit him for the exalted career of

the sculptor, the actor, the artist, or the poet—any ideal calling; in fact, any calling but a practical, matter-of-fact vocation; though in poetry he would seem to best succeed."

"Well," said my friend, seriously, "he's *feeling* for the boy!" Then laughingly: "Hedrick *has* written some rhymes for the county papers, and Sweeney once introduced him, at an Old Settlers' Meeting, as 'The Best Poet in Centre Township,' and never cracked a smile! Always after each other that way, but the best friends in the world. *Sweeney's* strong suit is elocution. He has a native ability that way by no means ordinary, but even that gift he abuses and distorts simply to produce grotesque and oftentimes ridiculous effects. For instance, nothing more delights him than to 'loathfully' consent to answer a request, at the Mite Society, some evening, for 'an appropriate selection'; and then, with an elaborate introduction of the same, and an exalted tribute to the refined genius of the author, proceed with a most grewsome rendition of 'Alonzo the Brave and the Fair Imogene,' in a way to coagulate the blood and curl the hair of his fair listeners with abject terror. Pale as a corpse, you know, and with that cadaverous face, lit with those malignant-looking eyes, his slender figure, and his long thin legs and arms and hands, and his whole diabolical talent and adroitness brought into play—why, I want to

say to you, it's *enough* to scare 'em to death! Never a smile from him, though, till he and Hedrick are safe out into the night again—then, of course, they hug each other and howl over it like Modocs! But pardon; I'm interrupting the lecture. Listen."

"A lack of continuity, however," continued the Professor, "and an undue love of approbation, would, measurably at least, tend to retard the young man's progress toward the consummation of any loftier ambition, I fear; yet, as we have intimated, if the subject were appropriately educated to the need's demand, he could doubtless produce a high order of both prose and poetry—especially the latter—though he could very illy bear being laughed at for his pains."

"He's dead wrong there," said my friend; "Hedrick enjoys being laughed at; he's used to it—gets fat on it!"

"Is fond of his friends," continued the Professor, "and the heartier they are the better; might even be convivially inclined—if so tempted,—but prudent—in a degree," loiteringly concluded the speaker, as though unable to find the exact bump with which to bolster up the last-named attribute.

The subject blushed vividly—my friend's right eyelid dropped, and there was a noticeable though elusive sensation throughout the audience.

"*But!*" said the Professor, explosively, "selecting a directly opposite subject, in conjunction with the study of the one before us [turning to the group at the rear of the stage and beckoning], we may find a newer interest in the practical comparison of these subjects side by side." And the Professor pushed a very pale young man into position.

"Sweeney!" whispered my friend, delightedly; "now look out!"

"In *this* subject," said the Professor, "we find the practical business head. Square—though small—a trifle light at the base, in fact; but well balanced at the important points at least; thoughtful eyes—wide-awake—crafty—quick—restless—a policy eye, though not denoting language—unless, perhaps, mere business forms and direct statements."

"Fooled again!" whispered my friend; "and I'm afraid the old man will fail to nest out the fact also that Sweeney is the cold-bloodedest guyer on the face of the earth, and with more diabolical resources than a prosecuting attorney; the Professor ought to know this, too, by this time—for these same two chaps have been visiting the old man in his room at the hotel;—that's what I was trying to tell you awhile ago. The old sharp thinks he's 'playing' the boys, is my idea; but it's the other way, or I lose my guess."

"Now, under the mesmeric influence—if the two subjects will consent to its administration," said the Professor, after some further tedious preamble—"we may at once determine the fact of my assertions, as will be proved by their action while in this peculiar state." Here some apparent remonstrance was met with from both subjects, though amicably overcome by the Professor first manipulating the stolid brow and pallid front of the imperturbable Sweeney, after which the same mysterious ordeal was loathfully submitted to by Hedrick, though a noticeably longer time was consumed in securing his final loss of self-control. At last, however, this curious phenomenon was presented,—and there before us stood the two swaying figures, the heads dropped back, the lifted hands, with thumb and finger-tips pressed lightly together, the eyelids languid and half closed, and the features, in appearance, wan and humid.

"Now, sir!" said the Professor, leading the limp Sweeney forward, and addressing him in a quick, sharp tone of voice.—"Now, sir, you are a great contractor—own large factories, and with untold business interests. Just look out there! [pointing out across the expectant audience] look there, and see the countless minions toiling servilely at your dread mandates. And yet—ha! ha! See! see!—They recognize the avaricious greed that

would thus grind them in the very dust; they see, alas! they see themselves half clothed, half fed, that you may glut your coffers. Half starved, they listen to the wail of wife and babe, and, with eyes upraised in prayer, they see *you* rolling by in gilded coach, and swathed in silk attire. But—ha! again! Look—look! they are rising in revolt against you! Speak to them before too late! Appeal to them—quell them with the promise of the just advance of wages they demand!"

The limp figure of Sweeney took on something of a stately and majestic air. With a graceful and commanding gesture of the hand, he advanced a step or two; then, after a pause of some seconds' duration, in which the lifted face grew paler, as it seemed, and the eyes a denser black, he said:

"But yesterday
I looked away
O'er happy lands, where sunshine lay
In golden blots
Inlaid with spots,
Of shade and wild forget-me-nots."

The voice was low, but clear, and even musical. The Professor started at the strange utterance, looked extremely confused, and, as the boisterous crowd cried

"Hear! hear!" he motioned the subject to continue, with some gasping comment interjected, which, if audible, would have run thus: "My God! it's an inspirational poem!"

"My head was fair
With flaxen hair—"

resumed the subject.

"Yoop-ee!" yelled an irreverent auditor.

"Silence! silence!" commanded the excited Professor, in a hoarse whisper; then, turning enthusiastically to the subject—"Go on, young man! Go on!—'*Thy head was fair with flaxen hair—*'"

"My head was fair
With flaxen hair,
And fragrant breezes, faint and rare,
And, warm with drouth
From out the south,
Blew all my curls across my mouth."

The speaker's voice, exquisitely modulated, yet resonant as the twang of a harp, now seemed of itself to draw and hold each listener; while a certain extravagance of gesticulation—a fantastic movement of both form and feature—seemed very near akin to fascination. And so flowed on the curious utterance:

"And, cool and sweet,
My naked feet
Found dewy pathways through the wheat;
And out again
Where, down the lane,
The dust was dimpled with the rain."

In the pause following there was a breathlessness almost painful. The poem went on:

"But yesterday
I heard the lay
Of summer birds, when I, as they
With breast and wing,
All quivering
With life and love, could only sing.

"My head was leant
Where, with it, blent
A maiden's, o'er her instrument;
While all the night,
From vale to height,
Was filled with echoes of delight.

"And all our dreams
Were lit with gleams
Of that lost land of reedy streams,

Along whose brim
Forever swim
Pan's lilies, laughing up at him."

And still the inspired singer held rapt sway.

"It is wonderful!" I whispered, under breath.

"Of course it is!" answered my friend. "But listen; there is more":

"But yesterday! . . .
O blooms of May,
And summer roses—where away?
O stars above;
And lips of love,
And all the honeyed sweets thereof!—

"O lad and lass,
And orchard pass,
And briered lane, and daisied grass!
O gleam and gloom,
And woodland bloom,
And breezy breaths of all perfume!—

"No more for me
Or mine shall be
Thy raptures—save in memory,—
No more—no more—
Till through the Door
Of Glory gleam the days of yore."

This was the evident conclusion of the remarkable utterance, and the Professor was impetuously fluttering his hands about the subject's upward-staring eyes, stroking his temples, and snapping his fingers in his face.

"Well," said Sweeney, as he stood suddenly awakened, and grinning in an idiotic way, "how did the old thing work?" And it was in the consequent hilarity and loud and long applause, perhaps, that the Professor was relieved from the explanation of this rather astounding phenomenon of the idealistic workings of a purely practical brain—or, as my impious friend scoffed the incongruity later, in a particularly withering allusion, as the "blank-blanked fallacy, don't you know, of staying the hunger of a howling mob by feeding 'em on spring poetry!"

The tumult of the audience did not cease even with the retirement of Sweeney; and cries of "Hedrick! Hedrick!" only subsided with the Professor's high-keyed announcement that the subject was even then endeavoring to make himself heard, but could not until utter quiet was restored, adding the further appeal that the young man had already been a long time under the mesmeric spell, and ought not to be so detained for an unnecessary period. "See," he concluded, with an assuring wave of

the hand toward the subject, "see; he is about to address you. Now, quiet!—utter quiet, if you please!"

"Great heavens!" exclaimed my friend, stiflingly; "just look at the boy! Get on to that position for a poet! Even Sweeney has fled from the sight of him!"

And truly, too, it was a grotesque pose the young man had assumed; not wholly ridiculous either, since the dwarfed position he had settled into seemed more a genuine physical condition than an affected one. The head, back-tilted, and sunk between the shoulders, looked abnormally large, while the features of the face appeared peculiarly childlike, especially the eyes—wakeful and wide apart, and very bright, yet very mild and very artless; and the drawn and cramped outline of the legs and feet, and of the arms and hands, even to the shrunken, slender-looking fingers, all combined to convey most strikingly to the pained senses the fragile frame and pixy figure of some pitiably afflicted child, unconscious altogether of the pathos of its own deformity.

"Now, mark the cuss, Horatio!" gasped my friend.

At first the speaker's voice came very low, and somewhat piping, too, and broken—an eerie sort of voice it was, of brittle and erratic *timbre* and undulant inflection. Yet it was beautiful. It had the ring of childhood in it, though the ring was not pure golden, and at times fell

echoless. The *spirit* of its utterance was always clear and pure and crisp and cheery as the twitter of a bird, and yet forever ran an under-cadence through it like a low-pleading prayer. Half garrulously, and as a shallow brook might brawl across a shelvy bottom, the rhythmic little changeling thus began:

"I'm thist a little crippled boy, an' never goin' to grow
An' git a great big man at all!—'cause Aunty told me so.
When I was thist a baby onc't I falled out of the bed
An' got 'The Curv'ture of the Spine'—'at's what the Doctor said.
I never had no Mother nen—fer my Pa runned away
An' dassn't come back here no more—'cause he was drunk one day
An' stobbed a man in thish-ere town, an' couldn't pay his fine!
An' nen my Ma she died—an' I got 'Curv'ture of the Spine'!"

A few titterings from the younger people in the audience marked the opening stanza, while a certain restlessness and a changing to more attentive positions seemed the general tendency. The old Professor, in the meantime, had sunk into one of the empty chairs. The speaker went on with more gayety:

"I'm nine years old! An' you can't guess how much I weigh, I bet!—
Last birthday I weighed thirty-three!—An' I weigh thirty yet!

I'm awful little fer my size—I'm purt' nigh littler nan
Some babies is!—an' neighbers all calls me 'The Little Man'!
An' Doc one time he laughed an' said: 'I 'spect, first thing you know,
You'll have a little spike-tail coat an' travel with a show!'
An' nen I laughed—till I looked round an' Aunty was a-cryin'—
Sometimes she acts like that, 'cause I got 'Curv'ture of the Spine'!"

Just in front of me a great broad-shouldered countryman, with a rainy smell in his cumbrous overcoat, cleared his throat vehemently, looked startled at the sound, and again settled forward, his weedy chin resting on the knuckles of his hands as they tightly clutched the seat before him. And it was like being taken into a childish confidence as the quaint speech continued:

"I set—while Aunty's washin'—on my little long-leg stool,
An' watch the little boys an' girls a-skippin' by to school;
An' I peck on the winder, an' holler out an' say:
'Who wants to fight The Little Man 'at dares you all to-day?'
An' nen the boys climbs on the fence, an' little girls peeks through,
An' they all says: ''Cause you're so big, you think we're 'feard o' you!'

An' nen they yell, an' shake their fist at me, like I shake mine—
They're thist in fun, you know, 'cause I got 'Curv'ture of the Spine'!"

"Well," whispered my friend, with rather odd irrelevance, I thought, "of course you see through the scheme of the fellows by this time, don't you?"

"I see nothing," said I, most earnestly, "but a poor little wisp of a child that makes me love him so I dare not think of his dying soon, as he surely must! There; listen!" And the plaintive gayety of the homely poem ran on:

"At evening, when the ironin's done, an' Aunty's fixed the fire,
An' filled an' lit the lamp, an' trimmed the wick an' turned it higher,
An' fetched the wood all in fer night, an' locked the kitchen door,
An stuffed the ole crack where the wind blows in up through the floor—
She sets the kittle on the coals, an' biles an' makes the tea,
An' fries the liver an' the mush, an' cooks a egg fer me;
An' sometimes—when I cough so hard—her elderberry wine
Don't go so bad fer little boys with 'Curv'ture of the Spine'!"

"Look!" whispered my friend, touching me with his elbow. "Look at the Professor!"

"Look at everybody!" said I. And the artless little voice went on again, half quaveringly:

"But Aunty's all so childish-like on my account, you see,
I'm 'most afeard she'll be took down—an' 'at's what bothers *me!*—
'Cause ef my good ole Aunty ever would git sick an' die,
I don't know what she'd do in Heaven—till *I* come, by an' by:—
Fer she's so ust to all my ways, an' ever'thing, you know,
An' no one there like me, to nurse an' worry over so!—
'Cause all the little childerns there's so straight an' strong an' fine,
They's nary angel 'bout the place with 'Curv'ture of the Spine'!"

The old Professor's face was in his handkerchief; so was my friend's in his; and so was mine in mine, as even now my pen drops and I reach for it again.

I half regret joining the mad party that had gathered an hour later in the old law office where these two graceless characters held almost nightly revel, the instigators and conniving hosts of a reputed banquet whose menu's range confined itself to herrings, or "blind robins," dried beef, and cheese, with crackers, gingerbread, and sometimes pie; the whole washed down with anything but

" —Wines that heaven knows when
Had sucked the fire of some forgotten sun,
And kept it through a hundred years of gloom
Still glowing in a heart of ruby."

But the affair was memorable. The old Professor was himself lured into it, and loudest in his praise of Hedrick's realistic art; and I yet recall him at the orgy's height, excitedly repulsing the continued slurs and insinuations of the clammy-handed Sweeney, who, still contending against the old man's fulsome praise of his more fortunate rival, at last openly declared that Hedrick was *not* a poet, *not* a genius, and in no way worthy to be classed in the same breath with *himself*—"the gifted but unfortunate *Sweeney*, sir—the unacknowledged author, sir—'y gad, sir!—of the two poems that held you spellbound to-night!"

DOWN AROUND THE RIVER POEMS

DOWN AROUND THE RIVER

NOON-TIME and June-time, down around the river!
Have to furse with 'Lizey Ann—but lawzy! I fergive
her!
Drives me off the place, and says 'at all 'at she's
a-wishin',
Land o' gracious! time'll come I'll git enough o' fishin'!
Little Dave, a-choppin' wood, never 'pears to notice;
Don't know where she's hid his hat, er keerin' where his
coat is,—
Specalatin', more'n like, he hain't a-goin' to mind me,
And guessin' where, say twelve o'clock, a feller'd likely
find me.

Noon-time and June-time, down around the river!
Clean out o' sight o' home, and skulkin' under kivver
Of the sycamores, jack-oaks, and swamp-ash and ellum—
Idies all so jumbled up, you kin hardly tell 'em!—

Tired, ye know, but *lovin'* it, and smilin' jes to think 'at
Any sweeter tiredness you'd fairly want to *drink* it.
Tired o' fishin'—tired o' fun—line out slack and slacker—
All you want in all the world's a little more tobacker!

Hungry, but *a-hidin'* it, er jes a-not a-keerin':—
Kingfisher gittin' up and skootin' out o' hearin';
Snipes on the t'other side, where the County Ditch is,
Wadin' up and down the aidge like they'd rolled their britches!
Old turkle on the root kindo'-sorto' drappin'
Intoo th' worter like he don't know how it happen!
Worter, shade and all so mixed, don't know which you'd orter
Say, th' *worter* in the shadder—*shadder* in the worter!

Somebody hollerin'—'way around the bend in
Upper Fork—where yer eye kin jes ketch the endin'
Of the shiny wedge o' wake some muss-rat's a-makin'
With that pesky nose o' his! Then a sniff o' bacon,
Corn-bread and 'dock-greens—and little Dave a-shinnin'
'Crost the rocks and mussel-shells, a-limpin' and a-grinnin',
With yer dinner fer ye, and a blessin' from the giver.
Noon-time and June-time down around the river!

KNEELING WITH HERRICK

DEAR Lord, to Thee my knee is bent.–
Give me content—
Full-pleasured with what comes to me,
Whate'er it be:
An humble roof—a frugal board,
And simple hoard;
The wintry fagot piled beside
The chimney wide,
While the enwreathing flames up-sprout
And twine about
The brazen dogs that guard my hearth
And household worth:
Tinge with the embers' ruddy glow
The rafters low;
And let the sparks snap with delight,
As fingers might
That mark deft measures of some tune
The children croon:

Then, with good friends, the rarest few
Thou holdest true,
Ranged round about the blaze, to share
My comfort there,—
Give me to claim the service meet
That makes each seat
A place of honor, and each guest
Loved as the rest.

HAS SHE FORGOTTEN?

I

Has she forgotten? On this very May
We were to meet here, with the birds and bees,
As on that Sabbath, underneath the trees
We strayed among the tombs, and stripped away
The vines from these old granites, cold and gray—
And yet, indeed, not grim enough were they
To stay our kisses, smiles, and ecstasies,
Or closer voice-lost vows and rhapsodies.
Has she forgotten—that the May has won
Its promise?—that the bird-songs from the tree
Are sprayed above the grasses as the sun
Might jar the dazzling dew down showeringly?
Has she forgotten life—love—every one—
Has she forgotten me—forgotten me?

II

Low, low down in the violets I press
My lips and whisper to her. Does she hear,
And yet hold silence, though I call her dear,
Just as of old, save for the tearfulness
Of the clinched eyes, and the soul's vast distress?
Has she forgotten thus the old caress
That made our breath a quickened atmosphere
That failed nigh unto swoon ng with the sheer
Delight? Mine arms clutch now this earthen heap
Sodden with tears that flow on ceaselessly
As autumn rains the long, long, long nights weep
In memory of days that used to be,—
Has she forgotten these? And, in her sleep,
Has she forgotten me—forgotten me?

III

To-night, against my pillow, with shut eyes,
I mean to weld our faces—through the dense
Incalculable darkness make pretence
That she has risen from her reveries
To mate her dreams with mine in marriages
Of mellow palms, smooth faces, and tense ease

Of every longing nerve of indolence,—
Lift from the grave her quiet lips, and stun
My senses with her kisses—drawl the glee
Of her glad mouth, full blithe and tenderly,
Across mine own, forgetful if is done
The old love's awful dawn-time when said we,
"To-day is ours!" . . . Ah, Heaven! can it be
She has forgotten me—forgotten me!

ME AND MARY

ALL my feelin's in the Spring
Gits so blame contrary,
I can't think of anything
Only me and Mary!
"Me and Mary!" all the time,
"Me and Mary!" like a rhyme,
Keeps a-dingin' on till I'm
Sick o' "Me and Mary!"

"Me and Mary! Ef us two
Only was together—
Playin' like we used to do
In the Aprile weather!"
All the night and all the day
I keep wishin' thataway
Till I'm gittin' old and gray
Jes on "Me and Mary!"

Muddy yit along the pike
Sence the Winter's freezin',
And the orchard's back'ard-like
Bloomin' out this season;
Only heerd one bluebird yit—
Nary robin ner tomtit;
What's the how and why of it?
'Spect it's "Me and Mary!"

Me and Mary liked the birds—
That is, *Mary* sorto'
Liked 'em first, and afterwards,
W'y, I thought *I'd* ort'o.
And them birds—ef Mary stood
Right here with me, like she should—
They'd be singin', them birds would,
All fer me and Mary.

Birds er not, I'm hopin' some
I can git to plowin'!
Ef the sun'll only come,
And the Lord allowin',
Guess to-morry I'll turn in
And git down to work ag'in;
This here loaferin' won't win,
Not fer me and Mary!

Fer a man that loves like me,
And's afeard to name it,
Till some other feller, he
Gits the girl—dad-shame-it!
Wet er dry, er clouds er sun—
Winter gone er jes begun—
Outdoor work fer me er none,
No more "Me and Mary!"

THE LOST PATH

ALONE they walked—their fingers knit together
And swaying listlessly as might a swing
Wherein Dan Cupid dangled in the weather
Of some sun-flooded afternoon of Spring.

Within the clover-fields the tickled cricket
Laughed lightly as they loitered down the lane,
And from the covert of the hazel-thicket
The squirrel peeped and laughed at them again.

The bumblebee that tipped the lily-vases
Along the roadside in the shadows dim,
Went following the blossoms of their faces
As tho' their sweets must needs be shared with him.

Between the pasture bars the wondering cattle
  Stared wistfully, and from their mellow bells
Shook out a welcoming whose dreamy rattle
  Fell swooningly away in faint farewells.

And tho' at last the gloom of night fell o'er them
  And folded all the landscape from their eyes,
They only knew the dusky path before them
  Was leading safely on to Paradise.

IN A BOX

I SAW them last night in a box at the play—
  Old age and young youth side by side.—
You might know by the glasses that pointed that way
  That they were—a groom and a bride;
And you might have known, too, by the face of the
    groom,
  And the tilt of his head, and the grim
Little smile of his lip, he was proud to presume
  That we men were all envying him.

Well, she was superb—an Elaine in the face—
  A Godiva in figure and mien,
With the arm and the wrist of a Parian "Grace,"
  And the high-lifted brow of a queen;
But I thought, in the splendor of wealth and of pride,
  And her beauty's ostensible prize,
I should hardly be glad if she sat by my side
  With that far-away look in her eyes.

HIS MOTHER

DEAD! my wayward boy—*my own*—
Not *the Law's!* but *mine*—the good
God's free gift to me alone,
Sanctified by motherhood.

"Bad," you say: Well, who is not?
"Brutal"—"with a heart of stone"—
And "red-handed."—Ah! the hot
Blood upon your own!

I come not, with downward eyes,
To plead for him shamedly,—
God did not apologize
When He gave the boy to me.

Simply, I make ready now
For *His* verdict.—*You* prepare—
You have killed us both—and how
Will you face us There?

KISSING THE ROD

O HEART of mine, we shouldn't
Worry so!
What we've missed of calm we couldn't
Have, you know!
What we've met of stormy pain,
And of sorrow's driving rain,
We can better meet again,
If it blow!

We have erred in that dark hour
We have known,
When our tears fell with the shower,
All alone!—
Were not shine and shower blent
As the gracious Master meant?—
Let us temper our content
With His own.

For, we know, not every morrow
Can be sad;
So, forgetting all the sorrow
We have had,
Let us fold away our fears,
And put by our foolish tears,
And through all the coming years
Just be glad.

BELLS JANGLED

I LIE low-coiled in a nest of dreams;
The lamp gleams dim i' the odorous gloom,
And the stars at the casement leak long gleams
Of misty light through the haunted room
Where I lie low-coiled in dreams.

The night winds ooze o'er my dusk-drowned face
In a dewy flood that ebbs and flows,
Washing a surf of dim white lace
Under my throat and the dark red rose
In the shade of my dusk-drowned face.

There's a silken strand of some strange sound
Slipping out of a skein of song:
Eerily as a call unwound
From a fairy bugle, it slides along
In a silken strand of sound.

There's the tinkling drip of a faint guitar;
  There's a gurgling flute, and a blaring horn
Blowing bubbles of tune afar
  O'er the misty heights of the hills of morn,
To the drip of a faint guitar.

And I dream that I neither sleep nor wake—
  Careless am I if I wake or sleep,
For my soul floats out on the waves that break
  In crests of song on the shoreless deep
Where I neither sleep nor wake.

MY BACHELOR CHUM

O a corpulent man is my bachelor chum,
With a neck apoplectic and thick—
An abdomen on him as big as a drum,
And a fist big enough for the stick;
With a walk that for grace is clear out of the case,
And a wobble uncertain—as though
His little bow-legs had forgotten the pace
That in youth used to favor him so.

He is forty, at least; and the top of his head
Is a bald and a glittering thing;
And his nose and his two chubby cheeks are as red
As three rival roses in spring.
His mouth is a grin with the corners tucked in,
And his laugh is so breezy and bright
That it ripples his features and dimples his chin
With a billowy look of delight.

He is fond of declaring he "don't care a straw"—
That "the ills of a bachelor's life
Are blisses compared with a mother-in-law,
And a boarding-school miss for a wife!"
So he smokes and he drinks, and he jokes and he winks,
And he dines and he wines, all alone,
With a thumb ever ready to snap as he thinks
Of the comforts he never has known.

But up in his den—(Ah, my bachelor chum!)—
I have sat with him there in the gloom,
When the laugh of his lips died away to become
But a phantom of mirth in the room.
And to look on him there you would love him, for all
His ridiculous ways, and be dumb
As the little girl-face that smiles down from the wall
On the tears of my bachelor chum.

MRS. MILLER

MRS. MILLER

JOHN B. MCKINNEY, Attorney and Counsellor at Law, as his sign read, was, for many reasons, a fortunate man. For many other reasons he was not. He was chiefly fortunate in being, as certain opponents often strove witheringly to designate him, "the son of his father," since that sound old gentleman was the wealthiest farmer in that section, with but one son and heir to, in time, supplant him in the rôle of "county god" and haply perpetuate the prouder title of "the biggest taxpayer on the assessment list." And this fact, too, fortunate as it would seem, was doubtless the indirect occasion of a liberal percentage of all John's misfortunes. From his earliest school-days in the little town, up to his tardy graduation from a distant college, the influence of his father's wealth invited his procrastination, humored its results, encouraged the laxity of his ambition, "and even now," as John used, in bitter irony, to put it, "it is

aiding and abetting me in the ostensible practice of my chosen profession, a listless, aimless, undetermined man of forty, and a confirmed bachelor at that!" At the utterance of this self-depreciating statement, John generally jerked his legs down from the top of his desk; and, rising and kicking his chair back to the wall, he would stump around his littered office till the manilla carpet steamed with dust. Then he would wildly break away, seeking refuge either in the open street, or in his room at the old-time tavern, The Eagle House, "where," he would say, "I have lodged and boarded, I do solemnly asseverate, for a long, unbroken, middle-aged eternity of ten years, and can yet assert, in the words of the more fortunately dying Webster, that 'I still live!'"

Extravagantly satirical as he was at times, John had always an indefinable drollery about him that made him agreeable company to his friends, at least; and such an admiring friend he had constantly at hand in the person of Bert Haines. Both were Bohemians in natural tendency, and, though John was far in Bert's advance in point of age, he found the young man "just the kind of a fellow to have around"; while Bert, in turn, held his senior in profound esteem—looked up to him, in fact, and in even his eccentricities strove to pattern after him. And so it was, when summer days were dull and tedious,

these two could muse and doze the hours away together; and when the nights were long and dark and deep and beautiful, they could drift out in the noon-light of the stars, and, with "the soft complaining flute" and "warbling lute," "lay the pipes," as John would say, for their enduring popularity with the girls! And it was immediately subsequent to one of these romantic excursions, when the belated pair, at two o'clock in the morning, had skulked up a side stairway of the old hotel, and gained John's room, with nothing more serious happening than Bert falling over a trunk and smashing his guitar,—just after such a night of romance and adventure it was that, in the seclusion of John's room, Bert had something of especial import to communicate.

"Mack," he said, as that worthy anathematized a spiteful match, and then sucked his finger.

"Blast the all-fired old torch!" said John, wrestling with the lamp-flue, and turning on a welcome flame at last. "Well, you said 'Mack!' Why don't you go on? And don't bawl at the top of your lungs, either. You've already succeeded in waking every boarder in the house with that guitar, and you want to make amends now by letting them go to sleep again!"

"But, my dear fellow," said Bert, with forced calmness, "you're the fellow that's making all the noise—and—"

"Why, you howling dervish!" interrupted John, with a feigned air of pleased surprise and admiration. "But let's drop controversy. Throw the fragments of your guitar in the wood-box there, and proceed with the opening proposition."

"What I was going to say was this," said Bert, with a half-desperate enunciation; "I'm getting tired of this way of living—clean, dead tired, and fagged out, and sick of the whole artificial business!"

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed John, with a towering disdain, "you needn't go any further! I know just what malady is throttling you. It's reform—reform! You're going to 'turn over a new leaf,' and all that, and sign the pledge, and quit cigars, and go to work, and pay your debts, and gravitate back into Sunday-school, where you can make love to the preacher's daughter under the guise of religion, and desecrate the sanctity of the innermost pale of the church by confessions at Class of your 'thorough conversion'! Oh, you're going to—"

"No, but I'm going to do nothing of the sort," interrupted Bert, resentfully. "What I mean—if you'll let me finish—is, I'm getting too old to be eternally undignifying myself with this 'singing of midnight strains under Bonnybell's window-panes,' and too old to be keeping myself in constant humiliation and expense by the

borrowing and stringing up of old guitars, together with the breakage of the same, and the general wear and tear on a constitution that is slowly being sapped to its foundations by exposure in the night air and the dew."

"And while you receive no further compensation in return," said John, "than, perhaps, the coy turning up of a lamp at an upper casement where the jasmine climbs; or an exasperating patter of invisible palms; or a huge dank wedge of fruit-cake shoved at you by the old man, through a crack in the door."

"Yes, and I'm going to have my just reward, is what I mean," said Bert, "and exchange the lover's life for the benedict's. Going to hunt out a good, sensible girl and marry her." And as the young man concluded this desperate avowal he jerked the bow of his cravat into a hard knot, kicked his hat under the bed, and threw himself on the sofa like an old suit.

John stared at him with absolute compassion. "Poor devil," he said, half musingly, "I know just how he feels—

> "'Ring in the wind his wedding chimes,
> Smile, villagers, at every door;
> Old churchyards stuffed with buried crimes,
> Be clad in sunshine o'er and o'er.—'"

"Oh, here!" exclaimed the wretched Bert, jumping to his feet; "let up on that dismal recitative. It would make a dog howl to hear that!"

"Then you 'let up' on that suicidal talk of marrying," replied John, "and all that harangue of incoherency about your growing old. Why, my dear fellow, you're at least a dozen years my junior, and look at me!" and John glanced at himself in the glass with a feeble pride, noting the gray sparseness of his side-hair, and its plaintive dearth on top. "Of course I've got to admit," he continued, "that my hair is gradually evaporating; but for all that, I'm 'still in the ring,' don't you know; as young in society, for the matter of that, as yourself! And this is just the reason why I don't want you to blight every prospect in your life by marrying at your age—especially a woman—I mean the kind of woman you'd be sure to fancy at your age."

"Didn't I say 'a good, sensible girl' was the kind I had selected?" Bert remonstrated.

"Oh!" exclaimed John, "you've selected her, then?—and without one word to me!" he ended, rebukingly.

"Well, hang it all!" said Bert, impatiently; "I knew how *you* were, and just how you'd talk me out of it; and I made up my mind that for once, at least, I'd follow the dictations of a heart that—however capricious in youth-

ful frivolities—should beat, in manhood, loyal to itself and loyal to its own affinity."

"Go it! Fire away! Farewell, vain world!" exclaimed the excited John.—"Trade your soul off for a pair of ear-bobs and a button-hook—a hank of jute hair and a box of lily-white! I've buried not less than ten old chums this way, and here's another nominated for the tomb."

"But you've got no *reason* about you," began Bert,—"I want to—"

"And so do *I* 'want to,'" broke in John, finally,—"I want to get some sleep.—So 'register' and come to bed.—And lie up on edge, too, when you *do* come—'cause this old catafalque of a bed is just about as narrow as your views of single blessedness! Peace! Not another word! Pile in! Pile in! I'm three-parts sick, anyhow, and I want rest!" And very truly he spoke.

It was a bright morning when the slothful John was aroused by a long, vociferous pounding on the door. He started up in bed to find himself alone—the victim of his wrathful irony having evidently risen and fled away while his pitiless tormentor slept—"Doubtless to at once accomplish that nefarious intent as set forth by his unblushing confession of last night," mused the miserable John. And he ground his fingers in the corners of his

swollen eyes, and leered grimly in the glass at the feverish orbs, bloodshot, blurred, and aching.

The pounding on the door continued. John looked at his watch; it was only eight o'clock.

"Hi, there!" he called, viciously. "What do you mean, anyhow?" he went on, elevating his voice again; "shaking a man out of bed when he's just dropping into his first sleep?"

"I mean that you're going to get up; that's what!" replied a firm female voice.—"It's eight o'clock, and I want to put your room in order; and I'm not going to wait all day about it, either! Get up and go down to your breakfast, and let me have the room!" And the clamor at the door was industriously renewed.

"Say!" called John, querulously, hurrying on his clothes,—"say! you!"

"There's no 'say' about it!" responded the determined voice: "I've heard about you and your ways around this house, and I'm not going to put up with it! You'll not lie in bed till high noon when I've got to keep your room in proper order!"

"Oh ho!" bawled John, intelligently: "reckon you're the new invasion here? Doubtless you're the girl that's been hanging up the new window-blinds that won't roll, and disguising the pillows with clean slips, and 'hennin'"

round among my books and papers on the table here, and aging me generally till I don't know my own handwriting by the time I find it! Oh, yes! you're going to revolutionize things here; you're going to introduce promptness and system and order. See you've even filled the wash-pitcher and tucked two starched towels through the handle. Haven't got any tin towels, have you? I rather like this new soap, too! So solid and durable, you know; warranted not to raise a lather. Might as well wash one's hands with a door-knob!" And as John's voice grumbled away into the sullen silence again, the determined voice without responded:

"Oh, you can growl away to your heart's content, Mr. McKinney, but I want you to distinctly understand that I'm not going to humor you in any of your old-bachelor, sluggardly, slovenly ways, and whims and notions. And I want you to understand, too, that I'm not hired help in this house, nor a chambermaid, nor anything of the kind. I'm the landlady here; and I'll give you just ten minutes more to get down to your breakfast, or you'll not get any—that's all!" And as the reversed cuff John was in the act of buttoning slid from his wrist and rolled under the dresser, he heard a stiff rustling of starched muslin flouncing past the door, and the quick italicized patter of determined gaiters down the hall.

"Look here," said John to the bright-faced boy in the hotel office, a half-hour later. "It seems the house here's been changing hands again."

"Yes, sir," said the boy, closing the cigar-case, and handing him a lighted match.

"Well, the new landlord, whoever he is," continued John, patronizingly, "is a good one. Leastwise, he knows what's good to eat, and how to serve it."

The boy laughed timidly,— "It ain't a 'landlord,' though—it's a landlady; it's my mother."

"Ah," said John, dallying with the change the boy had pushed toward him. "Your mother, eh? And where's your father?"

"He's dead," said the boy.

"And what's this for?" abruptly asked John, examining his change.

"That's your change," said the boy: "You got three for a quarter, and gave me a half."

"Well, *you* just keep it," said John, sliding back the change. "It's for good luck, you know, my boy. Same as drinking your long life and prosperity. And, Oh yes, by the way, you may tell your mother I'll have a friend to dinner with me to-day."

"Yes, sir, and thank you, sir," said the beaming boy.

"Handsome boy!" mused John, as he walked down

street. "Takes that from his father, though, I'll wager my existence!"

Upon his office desk John found a hastily written note. It was addressed in the well-known hand of his old chum. He eyed the missive apprehensively, and there was a positive pathos in his voice as he said aloud, "It's our divorce. I feel it!" The note, headed, "At the Office, four in Morning," ran like this:

DEAR MACK: I left you slumbering so soundly that, by noon, when you waken, I hope, in your refreshed state, you will look more tolerantly on my intentions as partially confided to you this night. I will not see you here again to say good-bye. I wanted to, but was afraid to "rouse the sleeping lion." I will not close my eyes to-night—fact is, I haven't time. Our serenade at Josie's was a prearranged signal by which she is to be ready and at the station for the five morning train. You may remember the lighting of three consecutive matches at her window before the igniting of her lamp. That meant, "Thrice dearest one, I'll meet thee at the depot at 4:30 sharp." So, my dear Mack, this is to inform you that, even as you read, Josie and I have eloped. It is all the old man's fault, yet I forgive him. Hope he'll return the favor. Josie predicts he will, inside of a week—or two weeks, anyhow. Good-bye, Mack, old boy; and let a fellow down as easy as you can.

Affectionately,

BERT.

"Heavens!" exclaimed John, stifling the note in his hand and stalking tragically around the room. "Can it be possible that I have nursed a frozen viper? an ingrate? a wolf in sheep's clothing? an orang-outang in gent's furnishings?"

"Was you callin' me, sir?" asked a voice at the door. It was the janitor.

"No!" thundered John. "Quit my sight! get out of my way! No, no, Thompson, I don't mean that," he called after him. "Here's a half-dollar for you, and I want you to lock up the office, and tell anybody that wants to see me that I've been set upon, and sacked and assassinated in cold blood; and I've fled to my father's in the country, and am lying there in the convulsions of dissolution, babbling of green fields and running brooks, and thirsting for the life of every woman that comes in gunshot!" And then, more like a confirmed invalid than a man in the strength and pride of his prime, he crept down into the street again, and thence back to his hotel.

Dejectedly and painfully climbing to his room, he encountered, on the landing above, a little woman in a jaunty dusting-cap and a trim habit of crisp muslin. He tried to evade her, but in vain. She looked him squarely in the face—occasioning him the dubious im-

pression of either needing shaving very badly, or having egg-stains on his chin.

"You're the gentleman in No. 11, I believe?" she said.

He nodded confusedly.

"Mr. McKinney is your name, I think?" she queried, with a pretty elevation of the eyebrows.

"Yes, ma'am," said John, rather abjectly. "You see, ma'am—But I beg pardon," he went on, stammeringly, and with a very awkward bow—"I beg pardon, but I am addressing—ah—the—ah—the—"

"You are addressing the new landlady," she interpolated, pleasantly. "Mrs. Miller is my name. I think we should be friends, Mr. McKinney, since I hear that you are one of the oldest patrons of the house."

"Thank you—thank you!" said John, completely embarrassed. "Yes, indeed!—ha, ha! Oh, yes—yes—really, we must be quite old friends, I assure you, Mrs. —Mrs.—"

"Mrs. Miller," smilingly prompted the little woman.

"Yes, ah, yes,—Mrs. Miller. Lovely morning, Mrs. Miller," said John, edging past her and backing toward his room.

But as Mrs. Miller was laughing outright, for some mysterious reason, and gave no affirmation in response to his proposition as to the quality of the weather, John,

utterly abashed and nonplussed, darted into his room and closed the door. "Deucedly extraordinary woman!" he thought; "wonder what's her idea!"

He remained locked in his room till the dinner-hour; and, when he promptly emerged for that occasion, there was a very noticeable improvement in his personal appearance, in point of dress, at least, though there still lingered about his smoothly shaven features a certain haggard, care-worn, anxious look that would not out.

Next his own place at the table he found a chair tilted forward, as though in reservation for some honored guest. What did it mean? Oh, he remembered now. Told the boy to tell his mother he would have a friend to dine with him—Bert—and, blast the fellow! he was, doubtless, dining then with a far preferable companion—his wife—in a palace-car on the P., C. & St. L., a hundred miles away. The thought was maddening. Of course, now, the landlady would have material for a new assault. And how could he avert it? A despairing film blurred his sight for the moment—then the eyes flashed daringly. "I will meet it like a man!" he said, mentally—"yea, like a State's Attorney,—I will invite it! Let her do her worst!"

He called a servant, directing some message in an undertone.

"Yes, sir," said the agreeable servant, "I'll go right away, sir," and left the room.

Five minutes elapsed, and then a voice at his shoulder startled him:

"Did you send for me, Mr. McKinney? What is it I can do?"

"You are very kind, Mrs.—Mrs.—"

"Mrs. Miller," said the lady, with a smile that he remembered.

"Yes—yes,—Mrs. Miller. Now, please, Mrs. Miller, spare me even the mildest of rebukes. I deserve your censure, but I can't stand it—I can't positively!" and there was a pleading look in John's lifted eyes that changed the little woman's smile to an expression of real solicitude. "I have sent for you," continued John, "to ask of you three great favors. Please be seated while I enumerate them. First—I want you to forgive and forget that ill-natured, uncalled-for grumbling of mine this morning when you wakened me."

"Why, certainly," said the landlady, again smiling, though quite seriously.

"I thank you," said John, with dignity. "And, second," he continued—"I want your assurance that my extreme confusion and awkwardness on the occasion of our meeting later were rightly interpreted."

"Certainly—certainly," said the landlady, with the kindliest sympathy.

"I am grateful—utterly," said John, with newer dignity. "And then," he went on,—"after informing you that it is impossible for the best friend I have in the world to be with me at this hour, as intended, I want *you* to do me the very great honor of dining with me. Will you?"

"Why, certainly," said the charming little landlady—"and a thousand thanks besides! But tell me something of your friend," she continued, as they were being served. "What is he like—and what is his name—and where is he?"

"Well," said John, warily,—"he's like all young fellows of his age. He's quite young, you know—not over thirty, I should say—a mere boy, in fact, but clever—talented—versatile."

"—Unmarried, of course," said the chatty little woman.

"Oh, yes!" said John, in a matter-of-course tone—but he caught himself abruptly—then stared intently at his napkin—glanced evasively at the side-face of his questioner, and said,—"Oh, yes! Yes, indeed! He's unmarried.—Old bachelor like myself, you know. Ha! Ha!"

"So he's not like the young man here that distinguished himself last night?" said the little woman, archly.

The fork in John's hand, half lifted to his lips, faltered and fell back toward his plate.

"Why, what's that?" said John, in a strange voice; "I hadn't heard anything about it—I mean I haven't heard anything about any young man. What was it?"

"Haven't heard anything about the elopement?" exclaimed the little woman, in astonishment.—"Why, it's been the talk of the town all morning. Elopement in high life—son of a grain-dealer, name of Hines, or Himes, or something, and a preacher's daughter—Josie somebody—didn't catch her last name. Wonder if you don't know the parties—Why, Mr. McKinney, are you ill?"

"Oh, no—not at all!" said John. "Don't mention it.—Ha—ha!—Just eating too rapidly, that's all. Go on with—you were saying that Bert and Josie had really eloped."

"What 'Bert'?" asked the little woman, quickly.

"Why, did I say Bert?" said John, with a guilty look. "I meant Haines, of course, you know—Haines and Josie.—And did they really elope?"

"That's the report," answered the little woman, as though deliberating some important evidence; "and they

say, too, that the plot of the runaways was quite ingenious. It seems the young lovers were assisted in their flight by some old fellow—friend of the young man's—Why, Mr. McKinney, you *are* ill, surely?"

John's face was ashen.

"No—no!" he gasped, painfully. "Go on—go on! Tell me more about the—the—the old fellow—the old reprobate! And is he still at large?"

"Yes," said the little woman, anxiously regarding the strange demeanor of her companion. "They say, though, that the law can do nothing with him, and that this fact only intensifies the agony of the broken-hearted parents—for it seems they have, till now, regarded him both as a gentleman and family friend in whom—"

"I really am ill," moaned John, waveringly rising to his feet; "but I beg you not to be alarmed. Tell your little boy to come to my room, where I will retire at once, if you'll excuse me, and send for my physician. It is simply a nervous attack. I am often troubled so; and only perfect quiet-and-seclusion restores me. You have done me a great honor, Mrs."—("Mrs.—Miller," sighed the sympathetic little woman)—"Mrs. Miller,—and I thank you more than I have words to express." He bowed limply, turned through a side-door opening on a stair, and tottered to his room.

During the three weeks' illness through which he passed, John had every attention—much more, indeed, than he had consciousness to appreciate. For the most part his mind wandered, and he talked of curious things, and laughed hysterically, and serenaded mermaids that dwelt in grassy seas of dew and were bald-headed like himself. He played upon a fourteen-jointed flute of solid gold, with diamond holes, and keys carved out of thawless ice. His old father came at first to take him home; but he could not be moved, the doctor said.

Two weeks of John's illness had worn away, when a very serious-looking young man, in a travelling-duster and a high hat, came up the stairs to see him. A handsome young lady was clinging to his arm. It was Bert and Josie. She had guessed the very date of their forgiveness. John had wakened even clearer in mind than usual that afternoon: he recognized his old chum at a glance, and Josie—now Bert's wife.—Yes, he comprehended that. He was holding a hand of each when another figure entered. His thin, white fingers loosened their clasp, and he held a hand toward the new-comer. "Here," he said, "is my best friend in the world—Bert, you and Josie will love her, I know; for this is Mrs.—Mrs.—"

"Mrs. Miller," said the radiant little woman.

"Yes,—Mrs. Miller," said John, very proudly.

RHYMES OF RAINY DAYS

A WORN-OUT PENCIL

WELLADAY!
Here I lay
You at rest—all worn away,
O my pencil, to the tip
Of our old companionship!

Memory
Sighs to see
What you are, and used to be,
Looking backward to the time
When you wrote your earliest rhyme!—

When I sat
Filing at
Your first point, and dreaming that
Your initial song should be
Worthy of posterity.

With regret
I forget
If the song be living yet,
    Yet remember, vaguely now,
    It was honest, anyhow.

You have brought
Me a thought—
Truer yet was never taught,—
    That the silent song is best,
    And the unsung worthiest.

So if I,
When I die,
May as uncomplainingly
    Drop aside as now you do,
    Write of me, as I of you:—

Here lies one
Who begun
Life a-singing, heard of none;
    And he died, satisfied,
    With his dead songs by his side.

THE STEPMOTHER

FIRST she come to our house,
  Tommy run and hid;
And Emily and Bob and me
  We cried jus' like we did
When Mother died,—and we all said
'At we all wisht 'at we was dead!

And Nurse she couldn't stop us,
  And Pa he tried and tried,—
We sobbed and shook and wouldn't look,
  But only cried and cried;
And nen some one—we couldn't jus'
Tell who—was cryin' same as us!

Our Stepmother! Yes, it was her,
  Her arms around us all—
'Cause Tom slid down the banister
  And peeked in from the hall.—
And we all love her, too, because
She's purt' nigh good as Mother was!

THE RAIN

I

THE rain! the rain! the rain!
It gushed from the skies and streamed
Like awful tears; and the sick man thought
How pitiful it seemed!
And he turned his face away
And stared at the wall again,
His hopes nigh dead and his heart worn out.
O the rain! the rain! the rain!

II

The rain! the rain! the rain!
And the broad stream brimmed the shores;
And ever the river crept over the reeds
And the roots of the sycamores:

A corpse swirled by in a drift
  Where the boat had snapt its chain—
And a hoarse-voiced mother shrieked and raved.
  O the rain! the rain! the rain!

III

The rain! the rain! the rain!—
  Pouring, with never a pause,
Over the fields and the green byways—
  How beautiful it was!
And the new-made man and wife
  Stood at the window-pane
Like two glad children kept from school.
  O the rain! the rain! the rain!

THE LEGEND GLORIFIED

"I DEEM that God is not disquieted"—
This in a mighty poet's rhymes I read;
And blazoned so forever doth abide
Within my soul the legend glorified.

Though awful tempests thunder overhead,
I deem that God is not disquieted,—
The faith that trembles somewhat yet is sure
Through storm and darkness of a way secure.

Bleak winters, when the naked spirit hears
The break of hearts, through stinging sleet of tears,
I deem that God is not disquieted;
Against all stresses am I clothed and fed.

Nay, even with fixed eyes and broken breath,
My feet dip down into the tides of death,
Nor any friend be left, nor prayer be said,
I deem that God is not disquieted.

WANT TO BE WHUR MOTHER IS

"WANT to be whur Mother is! Want to be whur
Mother is!"
Jeemses Rivers! won't some one ever shet that howl o'
his?
That-air yellin' drives me wild!
Cain't none of ye stop the child?
Want yer Daddy? "Naw." Gee-whizz!
"Want to be whur Mother is!"

"Want to be whur Mother is! Want to be whur
Mother is!"
Coax him, Sairy! Mary, sing somepin' fer him! Lift
him, Liz—
Bang the clock-bell with the key—
Er the *meat-axe!* Gee-mun-nee!
Listen to them lungs o' his!
"Want to be whur Mother is!"

"Want to be whur Mother is! Want to be whur
Mother is!"
Preacher guess'll pound all night on that old pulpit o'
his;
'Pears to me some wimmin jest
Shows religious interest
Mostly 'fore their fambly's riz!
"Want to be whur Mother is!"

. . . . . .

"Want to be whur Mother is! Want to be whur
Mother is!"
Nights like these and whipperwills allus brings that
voice of his!
Sairy; Mary; 'Lizabeth;
Don't set there and ketch yer death
In the dew—er rheumatiz—
Want to be whur Mother is?

THREE DEAD FRIENDS

ALWAYS suddenly they are gone—
  The friends we trusted and held secure—
Suddenly we are gazing on,
  Not a *smiling* face, but the marble-pure
Dead mask of a face that nevermore
  To a smile of ours will make reply—
    The lips close-locked as the eyelids are.—
Gone—swift as the flash of the molten ore
  A meteor pours through a midnight sky,
    Leaving it blind of a single star.

Tell us, O Death, Remorseless Might!
  What is this old, unescapable ire
You wreak on us?—from the birth of light
  Till the world be charred to a core of fire!
We do no evil thing to you—
  We seek to evade you—that is all—

That is your will—you will not be known
Of men. What, then, would you have us do?—
Cringe, and wait till your vengeance fall,
And your graves be fed, and the trumpet blown?

You desire no friends; but *we*—O we
Need them so, as we falter here,
Fumbling through each new vacancy,
As each is stricken that we hold dear.
One you struck but a year ago;
And one not a month ago; and one—
(God's vast pity!)—and one lies now
Where the widow wails, in her nameless woe,
And the soldiers pace, with the sword and gun,
Where the comrade sleeps, with the laurelled
brow.

And what did the first?—that wayward soul,
Clothed of sorrow, yet nude of sin,
And with all hearts bowed in the strange control
Of the heavenly voice of his violin.
Why, it was music the way he *stood*,
So grand was the poise of the head and so
Full was the figure of majesty!—
One heard with the eyes, as a deaf man would,

And with all sense brimmed to the overflow
With tears of anguish and ecstasy.

And what did the girl, with the great warm light
Of genius sunning her eyes of blue,
With her heart so pure, and her soul so white—
What, O Death, did she do to you?
Through field and wood as a child she strayed,
As Nature, the dear sweet mother, led;
While from her canvas, mirrored back,
Glimmered the stream through the everglade
Where the grape-vine trailed from the trees to wed
Its likeness of emerald, blue, and black.

And what did he, who, the last of these,
Faced you, with never a fear, O Death?
Did you hate *him* that he loved the breeze,
And the morning dews, and the rose's breath?
Did you hate him that he answered not
Your hate again—but turned, instead,
His only hate on his country's wrongs?
Well—you possess him, dead!—but what
Of the good he wrought?—With laurelled head
He bides with us in his deeds and songs.

Laurelled, first, that he bravely fought,
And forged a way to our flag's release;
Laurelled, next, for the harp he taught
To wake glad songs in the days of peace—
Songs of the woodland haunts he held
As close in his love as they held their bloom
In their inmost bosoms of leaf and vine—
Songs that echoed and pulsed and welled
Through the town's pent streets, and the sick child's room,
Pure as a shower in soft sunshine.

Claim them, Death; yet their fame endures.
What friend next will you rend from us
In that cold, pitiless way of yours,
And leave us a grief more dolorous?
Speak to us!—tell us, O Dreadful Power!—
Are we to have not a lone friend left?—
Since, frozen, sodden, or green the sod,
In every second of every hour,
Someone, Death, you have thus bereft,
Half inaudibly shrieks to God.

IN BOHEMIA

Ha! my dear! I'm back again—
  Vender of Bohemia's wares!
Lordy! how it pants a man
  Climbing up those awful stairs!
    Well, I've made the dealer say
    Your sketch *might* sell, anyway!
    And I've made a publisher
    Hear my poem, Kate, my dear!

In Bohemia, Kate, my dear—
  Lodgers in a musty flat
On the top floor—living here
  Neighborless, and used to that,—
    Like a nest beneath the eaves,
    So our little home receives
    Only guests of chirping cheer,
    We'll be happy, Kate, my dear!

Under your north-light there, you
At your easel, with a stain
On your nose of Prussian blue,
Paint your bits of shine and rain;
With my feet thrown up at will
At my littered window-sill,
I write rhymes that ring as clear
As your laughter, Kate, my dear!

Puff my pipe, and stroke my hair—
Bite my pencil-tip and gaze
At you, mutely mooning there
O'er your "Aprils" and your "Mays"!—
Equal inspiration in
Dimples of your cheek and chin
And the golden atmosphere
Of your paintings, Kate, my dear!

Trying! Yes, at times it is,—
To clink happy rhymes, and fling
On the canvas scenes of bliss,
When we are half famishing!—
When your "jersey" rips in spots,
And your hat's "forget-me-nots"
Have grown tousled, old and sear—
It *is* trying, Kate, my dear!

But—as sure—*some* picture sells,
And—sometimes—the poetry.—
Bless us! how the parrot yells
His acclaims at you and me!
How we revel then in scenes
Of high banqueting!—sardines—
Salads—olives—and a sheer
Pint of sherry, Kate, my dear!

Even now I cross your palm
With this great round world of gold!—
"Talking wild"? Perhaps I am—
Then, this little five-year-old!—
Call it anything you will,
So it lifts your face until
I may kiss away that tear
Ere it drowns me, Kate, my dear!

IN THE DARK

O IN the depths of midnight
  What fancies haunt the brain!
When even the sigh of the sleeper
  Sounds like a sob of pain.

A sense of awe and of wonder
  I may never well define,—
For the thoughts that come in the shadows
  Never come in the shine.

The old clock down in the parlor
  Like a sleepless mourner grieves,
And the seconds drip in the silence
  As the rain drips from the eaves.

And I think of the hands that signal
  The hours there in the gloom,
And wonder what angel watchers
  Wait in the darkened room.

And I think of the smiling faces
  That used to watch and wait,
Till the click of the clock was answered
  By the click of the opening gate.—

They are not there now in the evening—
  Morning or noon—not there;
Yet I know that they keep their vigil,
  And wait for me Somewhere.

THEM FLOWERS

TAKE a feller 'at's sick and laid up on the shelf,
All shaky, and ga'nted, and pore—
Jes all so knocked out he can't handle hisself
With a stiff upper lip any more ;
Shet him up all alone in the gloom of a room
As dark as the tomb, and as grim,
And then take and send him some roses in bloom,
And you can have fun out o' him!

You've ketched him 'fore now—when his liver
was sound
And his appetite notched like a saw—
A-mockin' you, maybe, fer romancin' round
With a big posy-bunch in yer paw ;
But you ketch him, say, when his health is away,
And he's flat on his back in distress,
And *then* you kin trot out yer little bokay
And not be insulted, I guess!

You see, it's like this, what his weaknesses is,—
  Them flowers makes him think of the days
Of his innocent youth, and that mother o' his,
  And the roses that *she* us't to raise:—
So here, all alone with the roses you send—
  Bein' sick and all trimbly and faint,—
My eyes is—my eyes is—my eyes is—old friend—
  Is a-leakin'—I'm blamed ef they ain't!

WHERE SHALL WE LAND?

"*Where shall we land you, sweet?*"—SWINBURNE.

ALL listlessly we float
Out seaward in the boat
That beareth Love.
Our sails of purest snow
Bend to the blue below
And to the blue above.
Where shall we land?

We drift upon a tide
Shoreless on every side,
Save where the eye
Of Fancy sweeps far lands
Shelved slopingly with sands
Of gold and porphyry.
Where shall we land?

The fairy isles we see,
Loom up so mistily—
So vaguely fair,

We do not care to break
Fresh bubbles in our wake
To bend our course for there.
Where shall we land?

The warm winds of the deep
Have lulled our sails to sleep,
And so we glide
Careless of wave or wind,
Or change of any kind,
Or turn of any tide.
Where shall we land?

We droop our dreamy eyes
Where our reflection lies
Steeped in the sea,
And, in an endless fit
Of languor, smile on it
And its sweet mimicry.
Where shall we land?

"Where shall we land?" God's grace!
I know not any place
So fair as this—
Swung here between the blue
Of sea and sky, with you
To ask me, with a kiss,
"Where shall we land?"

THE CHAMPION CHECKER-PLAYER OF AMERIKY

[THE HIRED MAN'S STORY]

THE CHAMPION CHECKER-PLAYER OF AMERIKY

Of course as fur as Checker-playin's concerned, you can't jest adzackly claim 'at lots makes fortunes and lots gits bu'sted at it—but still, it's on'y simple jestice to acknowledge 'at there're absolute p'ints in the game 'at takes scientific principles to figger out, and a mighty level-headed feller to *dim*onstrate, don't you understand!

Checkers is a' *old* enough game, ef age is any rickommendation; and it's a' evident fact, too, 'at "the tooth of time," as the feller says, which fer the last six thousand years has gained some reputation fer a-eatin' up things in giner'l, don't 'pear to 'a' gnawed much of a hole in Checkers—jedgin' from the checker-board of to-day and the ones 'at they're uccasionally shovellin' out at *Pom*p'y-*i*, er whatever it's name is. Turned up a checker-board there not long ago, I wuz readin' 'bout, 'at still had the spots on—as plain and fresh as the modern white-

pine board o' our'n, squared off with pencil-marks and pokeberry-juice. These is facts 'at history herself has dug out, and of course it ain't fer me ner you to turn our nose up at Checkers, whuther we ever tamper with the fool-game er not. Fur's that's concerned, I don't p'tend to be no checker-player *myse'f,*—but I know'd a feller onc't 'at *could* play, and sorto' made a business of it; and *that* man, in my opinion, was a geenyus! Name wuz Wesley Cotterl—John Wesley Cotterl—jest plain Wes, as us fellers round the Shoe-Shop ust to call him; ust to allus make the Shoe-Shop his headquarters-like; and, rain er shine, wet er dry, you'd allus find *Wes* on hands, ready to banter some feller fer a game, er jest a-settin' humped up there over the checker-board all alone, a-cipher'n' out some new move er 'nuther, and whistlin' low and solem' to hisse'f-like and a-payin' no attention to nobody.

And *I'll* tell *you*, Wes Cotterl wuz no man's fool, as sly as you keep it! He wuz a deep thinker, Wes wuz; and ef he'd 'a' jest turned that mind o' his loose on *preachin'*, fer instunce, and the 'terpertation o' the Bible, don't you know, Wes 'ud 'a' worked p'ints out o' there 'at no livin' expounderers ever got in gunshot of!

But Wes he didn't 'pear to be cut out fer nothin' much but jest Checker-playin'. Oh, of course, he *could* knock

round his own woodpile some, and garden a little, more er less; and the neighbers ust to find Wes purty handy 'bout trimmin' fruit-trees, you understand, and workin' in amongst the worms and cattapillers in the vines and shrubbery, and the like. And handlin' bees!—They wuzn't no man under the heavens 'at knowed more 'bout handlin' bees'n Wes Cotterl!—"Settlin'" the blame' things when they wuz a-swarmin'; and a-robbin' hives, and all sich fool-resks. W'y, I've saw Wes Cotterl, 'fore now, when a swarm of bees 'ud settle in a' orchard,—like they will sometimes, you know,—I've saw Wes Cotterl jest roll up his shirt-sleeves and bend down a' apple-tree limb 'at wuz jest kivvered with the pesky things, and scrape 'em back into the hive with his naked hands, by the quart and gallon, and never git a scratch! You couldn't *hire* a bee to sting Wes Cotterl! But *lazy?*—I think that man had railly ort to 'a' been a' Injun! He wuz the fust and on'y man 'at ever I laid eyes on 'at wuz too lazy to drap a checker-man to p'int out the right road fer a feller 'at ast him onc't the way to Burke's Mill; and Wes, 'ithout ever a-liftin' eye er finger, jest sorto' crooked out that mouth o' his'n in the direction the feller wanted, and says: "*H-yonder!*" and went on with his whistlin'. But all this hain't Checkers, and that's what I started out to tell ye.

Wes had a way o' jest natchurly a-cleanin' out anybody and ever'body 'at 'ud he'p hold up a checker-board! Wes wuzn't what you'd call a *lively* player at all, ner a competiter 'at talked much 'crost the board er made much furse over a game whilse he *wuz* a-playin'. He had his faults, o' course, and *would* take back moves 'casion'ly, er inch up on you ef you didn't watch him, mebby. But, *as a rule*, Wes had the insight to grasp the idy of whoever wuz a-playin' ag'in' him, and *his* style o' game, you understand, and wuz on the lookout continual'; and under sich circumstances *could* play as *honest* a game o' Checkers as the babe unborn.

One thing in *Wes's* favor allus wuz the feller's temper. —Nothin' 'peared to aggervate Wes, and nothin' on earth could break his slow and lazy way o' takin' his own time fer ever'thing. You jest *couldn't crowd Wes* er git him rattled anyway.—Jest 'peared to have one fixed principle, and that wuz to take plenty o' time, and never make no move 'ithout a-cipher'n' ahead on the prob'ble consequences, don't you understand! "Be shore you're right," Wes 'ud say, a-lettin' up fer a second on that low and sorry-like little wind-through-the-keyhole whistle o' his, and a-nosin' out a place whur he could swap one man fer two.—"Be shore you're right"—and somep'n' after this style wuz Wes's way: "Be shore you're right"—

(whistling a long, lonesome bar of "Barbara Allen")—"and then"—(another long, retarded bar)—"go ahead!"—And by the time the feller 'ud git through with his whistlin', and a-stoppin' and a-startin' in ag'in, he'd be about three men ahead to your one. And then he'd jest go on with his whistlin' 'sef nothin' had happened, and mebby you a-jest a-rearin' and a-callin' him all the mean, outlandish, ornry names 'at you could lay tongue to.

But Wes's good nature, I reckon, was the thing 'at he'ped him out as much as any other p'ints the feller had. And *Wes 'ud allus win, in the long run!*—I don't keer *who* played ag'inst him! It was on'y a question o' time with Wes o' waxin' it to the best of 'em. Lots o' players has *tackled* Wes, and right at the *start* 'ud mebby give him trouble,—but in the *long run*, now mind ye—*in the long run*, no mortal man, I reckon, had any business o' rubbin' knees with Wes Cotterl under no airthly checker-board in all this vale o' tears!

I mind onc't th' come along a high-toned feller from in around In'i'nop'lus somers.—Wuz a *lawyer*, er some *p'fessional* kind o' man. Had a big yaller, luther-kivvered book under his arm, and a bunch o' these-'ere big en*velop*'s and a lot o' suppeenies stickin' out o' his breast-pocket. Mighty slick-lookin' feller he wuz; wore a stove-pipe hat, sorto' set 'way back on his head—so's to show

off his Giner'l Jackson forr'ed, don't you know! Well-sir, this feller struck the place, on some business er other, and then missed the hack 'at *ort* to 'a' tuk him out o' here sooner'n it *did* take him out!—And whilse he wuz a-loafin' round, sorto' lonesome—like a feller allus *is* in a strange place, you know—he kindo' drapped in on our crowd at the Shoe-Shop, ostenchably to git a boot-strop stitched on, but *I* knowed, the minute he set foot in the door, 'at *that* feller wanted *comp'ny* wuss'n *cobblin'*.

Well, as good luck would have it, there set Wes, as usual, with the checker-board in his lap, a-playin' all by hisse'f, and a-whistlin' so low and solem'-like and sad it railly made the crowd seem like a *religious* getherun' o' some kind er other, we wuz all so quiet and still-like, as the man come in.

Well, the stranger stated his business, set down, tuk off his boot, and set there nussin' his foot and talkin' weather fer ten minutes, I reckon, 'fore he ever 'peared to notice Wes at all. We wuz all back'ard, anyhow, 'bout talkin' much; besides, we knowed, long afore he come in, all about how hot the weather wuz, and the pore chance there wuz o' rain, and all that; and so the subject had purty well died out, when jest then the feller's eyes struck Wes and the checker-board,—and I'll never fergit

the warm, salvation smile 'at flashed over him 'at the promisin' discovery. "*What!*" says he, a-grinnin' like a' angel and a-edgin' his cheer to'rds Wes, "have we a checker-board and checkers here?"

"We hev," says I, knowin' 'at Wes wouldn't let go o' that whistle long enough to answer—more'n to mebby nod his head.

"And who is your best player?" says the feller, kindo' pitiful-like, with another inquirin' look at Wes.

"Him," says I, a-pokin' Wes with a peg-float. But Wes on'y spit kindo' absent-like, and went on with his whistlin'.

"Much of a player, is he?" says the feller, with a sorto' doubtful smile at Wes ag'in.

"Plays a purty good hick'ry," says I, a-pokin' Wes ag'in. "Wes," says I, "here's a gentleman 'at 'ud mebby like to take a hand with you there, and give you a few idys," says I.

"Yes," says the stranger, eager-like, a-settin' his plug-hat keerful' up in the empty shelvin', and a-rubbin' his hands and smilin' as confident-like as old Hoyle hisse'f,—"Yes, indeed, I'd be glad to give the gentleman" (meanin' Wes) "a' idy er two about Checkers—ef *he'd* jest as lief,—'cause I reckon ef there're any one thing 'at I *do* know more about 'an another, it's Checkers," says he; "and there're no game 'at delights

me more—*pervidin'*, o' course, I find a competiter 'at kin make it anyways inter*est*in'."

"Got much of a rickord on Checkers?" says I.

"Well," says the feller, "I don't like to brag, but I've never *ben* beat—in any *legitimut* contest," says he, "and I've played more'n one o' *them*," he says, "here and there round the country. Of course, *your friend* here," he went on, smilin' sociable at Wes, "*he'll* take it all in good part ef I should happen to lead him a little—jest as *I'd* do," he says, "ef it wuz possible fer him to lead *me*."

"*Wes*," says I, "*has* warmed the wax in the yeers of some mighty good checker-players," says I, as he squared the board around, still a-whistlin' to hisse'f-like, as the stranger tuk his place, a-smilin'-like and roachin' back his hair.

"Move," says Wes.

"No," says the feller, with a polite flourish of his hand; "the first move shall be your'n." And, by jucks! fer all he wouldn't take even the advantage of a starter, he flaxed it to Wes the fust game in less'n fifteen minutes.

"Right shore you've give' me your best player?" he says, smilin' round at the crowd, as Wes set squarin' the board fer another game and whistlin' as onconcerned-like as ef nothin' had happened more'n ordinary.

"'S your move," says Wes, a-squintin' out into the game 'bout forty foot from shore, and a-whistlin' purt' nigh in a whisper.

Well-sir, it 'peared-like the feller railly didn't *try* to play; and you could see, too, 'at Wes knowed he'd about met his match, and played accordin'. He didn't make no move at all 'at he didn't give keerful thought to; whilse the feller—! well, as I wuz sayin', it jest 'peared-like *Checkers* wuz *child's-play* fer him! Putt in most o' the time 'long through the game a-sayin' things calkilated to kindo' bore a' ordinary man. But Wes helt hisse'f purty level, and didn't show no signs, and kep' up his *whistlin'*, mighty well—considerin'.

"Reckon you play the *fiddle*, too, as well as *Checkers?*" says the feller, laughin', as Wes come a-whistlin' out of the little end of the second game and went on a-fixin' fer the next round.

"'S my move!" says Wes, 'thout seemin' to notice the feller's tantalizin' words whatsomever.

"'L! *this* time," thinks I, "Mr. Smarty from the *me*-trolopin deestricts, *you're* liable to git *waxed—shore!*" But the *feller* didn't 'pear to think so at all, and played right ahead as glib-like and keerless as ever—'casion'ly a-throwin' in them sircastic remarks o' his'n,—'bout bein' "slow and shore" 'bout things in gineral.—"Liked

to *see* that," he said:—"Liked to see fellers do things with plenty o' *deliberation*, and even ef a feller *wuzn't* much of a checker-player, liked to see him *die* slow *anyhow!*—and then 'tend his own funeral," he says,—"and march in the p'session—to his own *music*," says he.—And jest then his remarks wuz brung to a close by Wes a-jumpin' two men, and a-lightin' square in the king-row. . . . "Crown that," says Wes, a-droppin' back into his old tune. And fer the rest o' *that* game Wes helt the feller purty level, but had to finally knock under—but by jest the clos'test kind o' shave o' winnin'.

"They ain't much use," says the feller, "o' keepin' *this* thing up—'less I could manage, *some* way er other, to git beat *onc't 'n a while!*"

"Move," says Wes, a-drappin' back into the same old whistle and a-*settlin'* there.

"'Music has charms,' as the Good Book tells us," says the feller, kindo' nervous-like, and a-roachin' his hair back as ef some sort o' p'tracted headache wuz a-settin' in.

"Never wuz '*skunked*,' wuz ye?" says Wes, kindo' suddent-like, with a fur-off look in them big white eyes o' his—and then a-whistlin' right on, 'sef he hadn't said *nothin'*.

"*Not much!*" says the feller, sorto' s'prised-like, as ef such a' idy as that had never struck him afore.—

"Never was 'skunked' *myse'f:* but I've saw fellers in my time 'at *wuz!*" says he.

But from that time on I noticed the feller 'peared to play more keerful, and railly la'nched into the game with somepin' like inter'st. Wes he seemed to be jest a-limberin'-up-like; and-sir, blame me! ef he didn't walk the feller's log fer him *that* time, 'thout no 'pearent trouble at all!

"And, *now*," says Wes, all quiet-like, a-squarin' the board fer another'n,—"we're kindo' gittin' at things *right*. Move." And away went that little unconcerned whistle o' his ag'in, and *Mr. Cityman* jest gittin' white and sweaty too—he wuz so nervous. Ner he didn't 'pear to find much to laugh at in the *next* game—ner the next *two* games nuther! Things wuz a-gittin' mighty inte*rest*in' 'bout them times, and I guess the feller wuz ser'ous-like a-wakin' up to the solem' fact 'at it tuk 'bout all *his* spare time to keep up his end o' the row, and even that state o' pore satisfaction wuz a-creepin' furder and furder away from him ever' new turn he undertook. Whilse *Wes* jest 'peared to git more deliber't' and certain ever' game; and that unendin' se'f-satisfied and comfortin' little whistle o' his never drapped a stitch, but toed out ever' game alike,—to'rds the *last*, and, fer the *most* part, disasterss to the feller 'at had started in with sich confi*dence* and actchul promise, don't you know.

Well-sir, the feller stuck the whole *forenoon* out, and then the *afternoon;* and then knuckled down to it 'way into the night—yes, and plum *midnight!*—And he buckled into the thing bright and airly *next morning!* And-sir, fer *two long days* and nights, a-hardly a-stoppin' long enough to *eat*, the feller stuck it out,—and Wes a-jest a-warpin' it to him hand-over-fist, and leavin' him furder behind, ever' game!—till finally, to'rds the last, the feller got so blame-don worked up and excited-like, he jest 'peared actchully purt' nigh plum crazy and histurical as a woman!

It wuz a-gittin' late into the shank of the second day, and the boys hed jest lit a candle fer 'em to finish out one of the clos'test games the feller'd played Wes fer some time. But Wes wuz jest as cool and ca'm as ever, and still a-whistlin' consolin' to hisse'f-like, whilse the feller jest 'peared wore out and ready to drap right in his tracks any minute.

"*Durn you!*" he snarled out at Wes, "hain't you never goern to move?" And there set Wes, a-balancin' a checker-man above the board, a-studyin' whur to set it, and a-fillin' in the time with that-air whistle.

"*Flames and flashes!*" says the feller ag'in, "will you *ever* stop that death-seducin' tune o' your'n long enough to move?"—And as Wes deliber't'ly set his man down

whur the feller see he'd haf to jump it and lose two men and a king, Wes wuz a-singin', low and sad-like, as ef all to hisse'f:

> *" O we'll move that man, and leave him there.—*
> *Fer the love of B-a-r-b—bry Al-len!"*

Well-sir! the feller jest jumped to his feet, upset the board, and tore out o' the shop stark-starin' crazy—blame ef he wuzn't!—'cause some of us putt out after him and overtook him 'way beyent the 'pike-bridge, and hollered to him;—and he shuk his fist at us and hollered back and says, says he: "Ef you fellers over here," says he, "'ll agree to *muzzle* that durn checker-player o' your'n, I'll bet fifteen hunderd dollars to fifteen cents 'at I kin beat him 'leven games out of ever' dozent!—But there're *no money*," he says, "'at kin hire me to play him ag'in, on this aboundin' airth, on'y on them conditions—'cause that durn, eternal, infernal, dad-blasted whistle o' his 'ud beat the oldest man in Ameriky!"

SWEET-KNOT AND CALAMUS

AN OLD SWEETHEART OF MINE

An old sweetheart of mine!—Is this her presence here
with me,
Or but a vain creation of a lover's memory?
A fair, illusive vision that would vanish into air
Dared I even touch the silence with the whisper of a
prayer?

Nay, let me then believe in all the blended false and
true—
The semblance of the *old* love and the substance of the
new—
The *then* of changeless sunny days—the *now* of shower
and shine—
But Love forever smiling—as that old sweetheart of
mine.

This ever-restful sense of *home*, though shouts ring in the hall—
The easy-chair—the old bookshelves and prints along the wall;
The rare *Habanas* in their box, or gaunt churchwarden-stem
That often wags, above the jar, derisively at them.

As one who cons at evening o'er an album, all alone,
And muses on the faces of the friends that he has known,
So I turn the leaves of Fancy, till, in shadowy design,
I find the smiling features of an old sweetheart of mine.

The lamplight seems to glimmer with a flicker of surprise,
As I turn it low—to rest me of the dazzle in my eyes,
And light my pipe in silence, save a sigh that seems to yoke
Its fate with my tobacco and to vanish with the smoke.

'Tis a *fragrant* retrospection—for the loving thoughts
that start
Into being are like perfume from the blossom of the
heart;
And to dream the old dreams over is a luxury divine—
When my truant fancies wander with that old sweetheart
of mine.

Though I hear beneath my study, like a fluttering of
wings,
The voices of my children and the mother as she sings—
I feel no twinge of conscience to deny me any theme
When Care has cast her anchor in the harbor of a
dream—

In fact, to speak in earnest, I believe it adds a charm
To spice the good a trifle with a little dust of harm,—
For I find an extra flavor in Memory's mellow wine
That makes me drink the deeper to that old sweetheart
of mine.

O Childhood days enchanted! O the magic of the
Spring!—
With all green boughs to blossom white, and all blue-
birds to sing!
When all the air, to toss and quaff, made life a jubilee
And changed the children's song and laugh to shrieks of
ecstasy.

With eyes half-closed in clouds that ooze from lips that
taste, as well,
The peppermint and cinnamon, I hear the old school-bell,
And from "Recess" romp in again from "Blackman's"
broken line,
To smile, behind my "lesson," at that old sweetheart of
mine.

A face of lily beauty, with a form of airy grace,
Floats out of my tobacco as the genii from the vase;
And I thrill beneath the glances of a pair of azure eyes
As glowing as the summer and as tender as the skies.

I can see the pink sunbonnet and the little checkered
dress
She wore when first I kissed her and she answered the
caress
With the written declaration that, "as surely as the vine
Grew round the stump," she loved me—that old sweet-
heart of mine.

Again I made her presents, in a really helpless way,—
The big "Rhode Island greening"—I was hungry, too,
that day!—
But I follow her with spelling, with her hand behind
her—so—
And I slip the apple in it—and the teacher doesn't know!

I give my *treasures* to her—all,—my pencil—blue-and-
red;
And, if little girls played marbles, *mine* should all be *hers*,
instead!
But *she* gave me her *photograph*, and printed "Ever
Thine"
Across the back—in blue-and-red—that old sweetheart of
mine!

And again I feel the pressure of her slender little hand,
As we used to talk together of the future we had
planned— .
When I should be a poet, and with nothing else to do
But write the tender verses that she set the music to. . . .

When we should live together in a cozy little cot
Hid in a nest of roses, with a fairy garden-spot,
Where the vines were ever fruited, and the weather ever
fine,
And the birds were ever singing for that old sweetheart of
mine.

When I should be her lover forever and a day,
And she my faithful sweetheart till the golden hair was
gray;
And we should be so happy that when either's lips were
dumb
They would not smile in Heaven till the other's kiss had
come.

But, ah! my dream is broken by a step upon the stair,
And the door is softly opened, and—my wife is standing
there:
Yet with eagerness and rapture all my visions I resign,
To greet the *living* presence of that old sweetheart of
mine.

MARTHY ELLEN

THEY'S nothin' in the name to strike
A feller more'n common-like!
'Tain't liable to git no praise
Ner nothin' like it nowadays;
An' yit that name o' her'n is jest
As purty as the purtiest—
And, more'n that, I'm here to say
I'll live a-thinkin' thataway
And die fer Marthy Ellen!

It may be I was prejudust
In favor of it from the fust—
'Cause I kin rickollect jest how
We met, and hear her mother now
A-callin' of her down the road,—
And—aggervatin' little toad!—

I see her now, jest sorto' half-
Way disapp'inted, turn and laugh
And mock her—"Marthy Ellen!"

Our people never had no fuss,
And yit they never tuk to us;
We neighbered back and forreds some—
Until they see she liked to come
To our house—and 'at me and her
Were jest together *ever'whur*
And *all* the time—and when they'd see
'At I liked her and she liked me,
They'd holler "Marthy Ellen!"

When we growed up, and they shet down
On me and her a-runnin' roun'
Together, and her father said
He'd never leave her nary red,
So he'p him, ef she married me,
And so on—and her mother she
Jest agged the gyrl, and said she 'lowed
She'd ruther see her in her shroud,
I *writ* to Marthy Ellen—

That is, I kindo' tuk my pen
In hand, and stated whur and when

The undersigned would be that night.
With two good hosses saddled right
Fer lively travellin' in case
Her folks 'ud like to jine the race,
She sent the same note back, and writ
"The rose is red!" right under it—
"Your'n allus, Marthy Ellen."

That's all, I reckon—Nothin' more
To tell but what you've heerd afore,—
The same old story, sweeter though
Fer all the trouble, don't you know.
Old-fashioned name! and yit it's jest
As purty as the purtiest—
And more'n that, I'm here to say
I'll live a-thinkin' thataway
And die fer Marthy Ellen!

MOON-DROWNED

'Twas the height of the fête when we quitted the riot
And quietly stole to the terrace alone,
Where, pale as the lovers that ever swear by it,
The moon it gazed down as a god from his throne:
We stood there enchanted.—And O the delight of
The sight of the stars and the moon and the sea,
And the infinite skies of that opulent night of
Purple and gold and ivory!

The lisp of the lip of the ripple just under—
The half-awake nightingale's dream in the yews—
Came up from the water, and down from the wonder
Of shadowy foliage, drowsed with the dews,—
Unsteady the firefly's taper—unsteady
The poise of the stars, and their light in the tide,
As it struggled and writhed in caress of the eddy,
As love in the billowy breast of a bride.

The far-away lilt of the waltz rippled to us,
And through us the exquisite thrill of the air:
Like the scent of bruised bloom was her breath, and its dew was
Not honeyer-sweet than her warm kisses were.
We stood there enchanted.—And O the delight of
The sight of the stars and the moon and the sea,
And the infinite skies of that opulent night of
Purple and gold and ivory!

LONG AFORE HE KNOWED

JES a little bit o' feller—I remember still,—
Ust to almost *cry* fer Christmas, like a youngster will:
Fourth o' July's nothin' to it!—New Year's ain't a smell!
Easter Sunday—Circus day—jes all dead in the shell!
Lordy, though! at night, you know, to set around and
hear
The old folks work the story off about the sledge and
deer,
And "Santy" skootin' round the roof, all wrapped in
fur and fuzz—
Long afore
I knowed who
"Santy Claus" wuz!

Ust to wait, and set up late, a week er two ahead:
Couldn't hardly keep awake, ner wouldn't go to bed:

Kittle stewin' on the fire, and Mother settin' here
Darnin' socks, and rockin' in the skreeky rockin'-cheer;
Pap gap', and wunder where it wuz the money went,
And quar'l with his frosted heels, and spill his liniment:
And me a-dreamin' sleigh-bells when the clock 'ud whir
and buzz,
Long afore
I knowed who
"Santy Claus" wuz!

Size the fireplace up, and figger how "Old Santy"
could
Manage to come down the chimbly, like they said he
would:
Wisht that I could hide and see him—wundered what
he'd say
Ef he ketched a feller layin' fer him thataway!
But I *bet* on him, and *liked* him, same as ef he had
Turned to pat me on the back and say, "Look here, my
lad,
Here's my pack,—jes he'p yourse'f, like all good boys
does!"
Long afore
I knowed who
"Santy Claus" wuz!

Wisht that yarn was *true* about him as it 'peared to
be—
Truth made out o' lies like *that* un's good enough fer
me!—
Wisht I still wuz so confidin' I could jes go wild
Over hangin' up my stockin's, like the little child
Climbin' in my lap to-night and beggin' me to tell
'Bout them reindeers, and "Old Santy" that she loves
so well,
I'm half sorry fer this little-girl-sweetheart of his—
Long afore
She knows who
"Santy Claus" is!

DEAR HANDS

THE touches of her hands are like the fall
Of velvet snowflakes; like the touch of down
The peach just brushes 'gainst the garden wall;
The flossy fondlings of the thistle-wisp
Caught in the crinkle of a leaf of brown
The blighting frost hath turned from green to crisp.

Soft as the falling of the dusk at night,
The touches of her hands, and the delight—
The touches of her hands!
The touches of her hands are like the dew
That falls so softly down no one e'er knew
The touch thereof save lovers like to one
Astray in lights where ranged Endymion.

O rarely soft, the touches of her hands,
As drowsy zephyrs in enchanted lands;
  Or pulse of dying fay; or fairy sighs;
Or—in between the midnight and the dawn,
When long unrest and tears and fears are gone—
  Sleep, smoothing down the lids of weary eyes.

THIS MAN JONES

This man Jones was what you'd call
A feller 'at had no sand at all;
Kindo' consumpted, and undersize',
And sallor-complected, with big sad eyes
And a kind-of-a sort-of-a hang-dog style,
And a sneakin' sort-of-a half-way smile
'At kindo' give him away to us
As a preacher, maybe, er somepin' wuss.

Didn't take with the gang—well, no—
But still we managed to use him, though,—
Coddin' the gilly along the rout',
And drivin' the stakes 'at he pulled out—
Fer I was one of the bosses then,
And of course stood in with the canvasmen;
And the way we put up jobs, you know,
On this man Jones jes beat the show!

Ust to rattle him scandalous
And keep the feller a-dodgin' us—
A-shyin' round half skeered to death
And afeard to whimper above his breath;
Give him a cussin', and then a kick,
And then a kind-of-a back-hand lick—
Jes fer the fun of seein' him climb
Around with a "head" on most the time.

But what was the curioust thing to me,
Was along o' the party—lem me see,—
Who was our "Lion Queen" last year?—
Mamzelle Zanty, er De La Pierre?—
Well, no matter—a stunnin' mash,
With a red-ripe lip, and a long eyelash,
And a figger sich as the angels owns—
And one too many fer this man Jones.

He'd allus wake in the afternoon,
As the band waltzed in on "the lion-tune,"
And there, from the time 'at she'd go in
Till she'd back out of the cage ag'in,
He'd stand, shaky and limber-kneed—
'Specially when she come to "feed
The beasts raw meat with her naked hand"—
And all that business, you understand.

And it *was* resky in that den—
Fer I think she juggled three cubs then,
And a big "green" lion 'at ust to smash
Collar-bones fer old Frank Nash;
And I reckon now she hain't fergot
The afternoon old "Nero" sot
His paws on *her!*—but as fer me,
It's a sort of a mixed-up mystery:—

Kindo' remember an awful roar,
And see her back fer the bolted door—
See the cage rock—heerd her call
"God have mercy!" and that was all—
Fer they ain't no livin' man can tell
What it's like when a thousand yell
In female tones, and a thousand more
Howl in bass till their throats is sore!

But the keepers said 'at dragged her out,
They heerd some feller laugh and shout
"Save her! Quick! I've got the cuss!"
And yit she waked and smiled on *us!*
And we daren't flinch, fer the doctor said,
Seein' as this man Jones was dead,
Better to jes not let *her* know
Nothin' o' that fer a week er so.

TO MY GOOD MASTER

In fancy, always, at thy desk, thrown wide,
Thy most betreasured books ranged neighborly—
The rarest rhymes of every land and sea
And curious tongue—thine old face glorified,—
Thou haltest thy glib quill, and, laughing-eyed,
Givest hale welcome even unto me,
Profaning thus thine attic's sanctity,
To visit briefly, yet still to abide
Enthralled there of thy sorcery of wit
And thy songs' most exceeding dear conceits.
O lips, cleft to the ripe core of all sweets,
With poems, like nectar, issuing therefrom,
Thy gentle utterances do overcome
My listening heart and all the love of it!

AT BROAD RIPPLE

Ah, luxury! Beyond the heat
And dust of town, with dangling feet
Astride the rock below the dam,
In the cool shadows where the calm
Rests on the stream again, and all
Is silent save the waterfall,—
I bait my hook and cast my line,
And feel the best of life is mine.

No high ambition may I claim—
I angle not for lordly game
Of trout, or bass, or wary bream—
A black perch reaches the extreme
Of my desires; and "goggle-eyes"
Are not a thing that I despise;
A sunfish, or a "chub," or "cat"—
A "silverside"—yea, even that!

In eloquent tranquillity
The waters lisp and talk to me.
Sometimes, far out, the surface breaks,
As some proud bass an instant shakes
His glittering armor in the sun,
And romping ripples, one by one,
Come dallying across the space
Where undulates my smiling face.

The river's story flowing by,
Forever sweet to ear and eye,
Forever tenderly begun—
Forever new and never done.
Thus lulled and sheltered in a shade
Where never feverish cares invade,
I bait my hook and cast my line,
And feel the best of life is mine.

WHEN OLD JACK DIED

I

WHEN Old Jack died, we stayed from school (they said,
At home, we needn't go that day), and none
Of us ate any breakfast—only one,
And that was *Pa*pa—and his eyes were red
When he came round where we were, by the shed
Where Jack was lying, half-way in the sun
And half-way in the shade. When we begun
To cry out loud, Pa turned and dropped his head
And went away; and *Ma*ma she went back
Into the kitchen. Then, for a long while,
All to ourselves, like, we stood there and cried.
We thought so many good things of Old Jack,
And funny things—although we didn't smile—
We couldn't only cry when Old Jack died.

II

When Old Jack died, it seemed a human friend
Had suddenly gone from us; that some face
That we had loved to fondle and embrace
From babyhood, no more would condescend
To smile on us forever. We might bend
With tearful eyes above him, interlace
Our chubby fingers o'er him, romp and race,
Plead with him, call and coax—ay, we might send
The old halloo up for him, whistle, hist
(If sobs had let us); or have, all as vain,
Snapped thumbs, called "Speak," and he had not replied;
We might have gone down on our knees and kissed
The tousled ears, and yet they must remain
Deaf, motionless, we knew—when Old Jack died.

III

When Old Jack died, it seemed to us, someway,
That all the other dogs in town were pained
With our bereavement, and some that were chained,
Even, unslipped their collars on that day
To visit Jack in state, as though to pay

A last, sad tribute there, while neighbors craned
Their heads above the high board-fence and deigned
To sigh "Poor dog!" remembering how they
Had cuffed him, when alive, perchance, because,
For love of them, he leaped to lick their hands—
Now, that he *could* not, were they satisfied?
We children thought that, as we crossed his paws,
And o'er his grave, 'way down the bottom-lands,
Wrote "Our First Love Lies Here," when Old Jack died.

DOC SIFERS

Of all the doctors I could cite you to in this-'ere town
Doc Sifers is my favorite, jes take him up and down!
Count in the Bethel Neighberhood, and Rollins, and Big Bear,
And Sifers' standin's jes as good as ary doctor's there!

There's old Doc Wick, and Glenn, and Hall, and Wurgler, and McVeigh,
But I'll buck Sifers 'g'inst 'em all and down 'em any day!
Most old Wick *ever* knowed, I s'pose, wuz *whiskey!* Wurgler—well,
He et morphine—ef actions shows, and facts 's reliable!

But Sifers—though he ain't no sot, he's got his faults; and yit
When you *git* Sifers onc't, you've got a *doctor*, don't fergit!

He ain't much at his office, er his house, er anywhere
You'd natchurly think certain fer to ketch the feller there.—

But don't blame Doc: he's got all sorts o' cur'ous notions —as
The feller says, his "odd-come-shorts," like smart men mostly has.—
He'll more'n like be potter'n' round the Blacksmith Shop; er in
Some back lot, spadin' up the ground, er gradin' it ag'in;

Er at the work-bench, planin' things; er buildin' little traps
To ketch birds; galvenizin' rings; er graftin' plums, perhaps.
Make anything! good as the best!—a gun-stock—er a flute;
He whittled out a set o' chesstmen onc't o' laurel root,

Durin' the Army—got his trade o' *surgeon* there—I own
To-day a finger-ring Doc made o' sealin'-wax and bone!
And glued a fiddle onc't fer me—jes all so busted you
'D 'a' throwed the thing away, but he fixed her as good as new!

And take Doc. now, in *aigger*, say, er *cramps*, er *rheumatiz*,
And all afflictions thataway, and he's the best they is!
Er janders—milk sick—I don't keer—k-yore anything he tries—
A felon; er a frost-bit ear; er granilated eyes!

There wuz the Widder Daubenspeck they all give up fer dead—
With fits, and lig'ture-o'-the-neck, and clean out of her head!
First had this doctor, what's-his-name, from "Puddlesburg," and then
This little redhead, "Burnin' Shame" they call him—Dr. Glenn.

And they "*consulted*" on the case, and claimed she'd haf to die.—
I jes wuz joggin' by the place, and heerd her dorter cry,
And stops and calls her to the fence; and I-says-I, "Let me
Send *Sifers*—bet you fifteen cents he'll k-yore her!"
"Well," says she,

"*Light out!*" she says: And, lipp-tee-cut! I loped in
town—and rid
'Bout two hours more to find him, but I scored him when
I did!
He wuz down at the Gunsmith Shop, a-stuffin' birds! Says
he,
"My sulky's broke." Says I, "You hop right on and ride
with me!"

I *got* him there!—"Well, Aunty, ten days k-yores you,"
Sifers said,
"But what's yer idy linger'n' when they want you Over-
head?"
And there's Dave Banks—jes back from war without a
scratch—one day
Got ketched up in a sickle-bar—a reaper-runaway.—

His shoulders, arms, and hands and legs jes sawed in
strips! And Jake
Dunn starts fer Sifers—feller begs to shoot him, pity's
sake!
Doc, 'course, wuz gone; but he had penned the notice,
"At Big Bear—
Be back to-morry: Gone to 'tend the Bee Convention
there."

But Jake, he tracked him—rid and rode the whole endurin' night!
And 'bout the time the roosters crowed they both hove into sight.
Doc had to ampitate, but 'greed to save Dave's *arms*, and said
He could 'a' saved his *legs* ef he'd got there four hours ahead.

Doc's wife's own mother purt' nigh died onc't 'fore he could be found,
And all the neighbers fur-and-wide a-all jes chasin' round!
Tel finally—I had to laugh—'t'uz jes like Doc, you know,—
Wuz learnin' fer to telegraph, down at the old deepo.

But all they're faultin' Sifers fer, they's none of 'em kin say
He's *biggoty*, er *keerless*, er not *posted*, anyway:
He ain't built on the common plan of doctors *nowadays*,—
He's jes a great, big, brainy man—that's where the trouble lays!

AT NOON—AND MIDNIGHT

FAR in the night, and yet no rest for him! The pillow next his own
The wife's sweet face in slumber pressed—yet he awake —alone! alone!
In vain he courted sleep;—one thought would ever in his heart arise,—
The harsh words that at noon had brought the teardrops to her eyes.

Slowly on lifted arm he raised and listened. All was still as death;
He touched her forehead as he gazed, and listened yet, with bated breath:
Still silently, as though he prayed, his lips moved lightly as she slept—
For God was with him, and he laid his face with hers and wept.

A WILD IRISHMAN

A WILD IRISHMAN

Not very many years ago the writer was for some months stationed at South Bend, a thriving little city of northern Indiana. Its population lies mainly on one side of the St. Joseph River, but quite a respectable fraction thereof, taking its industrial way to the opposite shore, gains an audience and a hearing in the rather imposing growth and hurly-burly of the big manufactories there, and the consequent accumulation of neat cottages, tenement houses, and business blocks. A stranger, entering South Bend proper on any ordinary day, will be at some loss to account for its prosperous appearance—its flagged and bowldered streets, its handsome mercantile blocks, banks, and business houses generally. Reasoning from cause to effect, and seeing but a meagre sprinkling of peo-

ple on the streets throughout the day, these for the most part mere idlers, and in no wise accessory to the evident thrift and opulence of their surroundings, he will be puzzled at the situation. But when evening comes, and the outlying foundries, sewing-machine, wagon, plough, and other "works," together with the paper-mills and all the nameless industries, suspend operations for the day, and the workmen and workwomen, as a vast army, suddenly invade and overflow bridge, roadway, street, and lane, the startled stranger will fully comprehend the why and wherefore of the city's high prosperity. And, once acquainted with the people there, the fortunate sojourner will find no ordinary culture and intelligence, and, as certainly, he will meet with a social spirit and a whole-souled heartiness that will make the place a lasting memory. The town, too, is the home of many world-known notables, and a host of local celebrities, the chief of which latter class I found, during my stay there, in the person of Tommy Stafford, or the "Wild Irishman," as everybody called him.

"Talk of odd fellows and eccentric characters," said Major Blowney, my employer, one afternoon, "you must see our 'Wild Irishman' here before you say you've yet found the queerest, brightest, cleverest chap in all your travels. What d'ye say, Stockford?" And the Major paused in his work of charging cartridges for his new

breech-loading shot-gun and turned to await his partner's response.

Stockford, thus addressed, paused above the shield-sign he was lettering, slowly smiling as he dipped and trailed his pencil through the ivory-black upon a bit of broken glass and said, in his deliberate, half-absent-minded way,—"Is it Tommy you're telling him about?" And then, with a gradual broadening of the smile, he went on, "Well, I should say so. Tommy! What's 'come of the fellow, anyway? I haven't seen him since his last bout with the mayor, on his trial for shakin' up that fast horse-man."

"The fast horse-man got just exactly what he needed, too," said the genial Major, laughing, and mopping his perspiring brow. "The fellow was barkin' up the wrong stump when he tackled Tommy! Got beat in the trade, at his own game, you know, and wound up by an insult that no Irishman would take; and Tommy just naturally wore out the hall carpet of the old hotel with him!"

"And then collared and led him to the mayor's office himself, they say!"

"Oh, he did!" said the Major, with a dash of pride in the confirmation; "that's Tommy all over!"

"Funny trial, wasn't it?" continued the ruminating Stockford.

"Wasn't it, though?" laughed the Major. "The porter's testimony: You see, he was for Tommy, of course, and on examination testified that the horse-man struck Tommy first. And there Tommy broke in with: 'He's a-meanin' well, yer Honor, but he's lyin' to ye—he's lyin' to ye. No livin' man iver struck me firsht—nor lasht, nayther, for the matter av that!' And I thought—the—court—would—die!" concluded the Major, in a like imminent state of merriment.

"Yes, and he said if he struck him first," supplemented Stockford, "he'd like to know why the horse-man was 'wearin' all the black eyes, and the blood, and the boomps on the head av 'um!' And it's that talk of his that got him off with so light a fine!"

"As it always does," said the Major, coming to himself abruptly and looking at his watch. "Stock', you say you're not going along with our duck-shooting party this time? The old Kankakee is just lousy with 'em this season!"

"Can't go possibly," said Stockford, "not on account of the work at all, but the folks at home ain't just as well as I'd like to see them, and I'll stay here till they're better. Next time I'll try and be ready for you. Going to take Tommy, of course?"

"Of course! Got to have the 'Wild Irishman' with

us! I'm going around to find him now." Then turning to me the Major continued, "Suppose you get on your coat and hat and come along? It's the best chance you'll ever have to meet Tommy. It's late anyhow, and Stockford'll get along without you. Come on."

"Certainly," said Stockford; "go ahead. And you can take him ducking, too, if he wants to go."

"But he doesn't want to go—and won't go," replied the Major, with a commiserative glance at me. "Says he doesn't know a duck from a poll-parrot—nor how to load a shot-gun—and couldn't hit a house if he were inside of it and the doors shut. Admits that he nearly killed his uncle once, on the other side of a tree, with a squirrel runnin' down it. Don't *want* him along!"

Reaching the street with the genial Major, he gave me this advice: "Now, when you meet Tommy, you mustn't take all he says for dead earnest, and you mustn't believe, because he talks loud, and in italics every other word, that he wants to do all the talking and won't be interfered with. That's the way he's apt to strike folks at first—but it's their mistake, not his. Talk back to him—controvert him whenever he's aggressive in the utterance of his opinions, and if you're only honest in the announcement of your own ideas and beliefs, he'll like you all the better for standing by them.

He's quick-tempered, and perhaps a trifle sensitive, so share your greater patience with him, and he'll pay you back by fighting for you at the drop of the hat. In short, he's as nearly typical of his gallant country's brave, impetuous, fun-loving individuality as such a likeness can exist."

"But is he quarrelsome?" I asked.

"Not at all. There's the trouble. If he'd only quarrel there'd be no harm done. Quarrelling's cheap, and Tommy's extravagant. A big blacksmith here, the other day, kicked some boy out of his shop, and Tommy, on his cart, happened to be passing at the time; and he just jumped off without a word, and went in and worked on that fellow for about three minutes, with such disastrous results that they couldn't tell his shop from a slaughter-house; paid an assault-and-battery fine, and gave the boy a dollar besides, and the whole thing was a positive luxury to him. But I guess we'd better drop the subject, for here's his cart, and here's Tommy. Hi! there, you 'Far-down' Irish Mick!" called the Major, in affected antipathy, "been out raiding the honest farmers' hen-roosts again, have you?"

We had halted at a corner grocery and produce store, as I took it, and the smooth-faced, shave-headed man in

woollen shirt, short vest, and suspenderless trousers, so boisterously addressed by the Major, was just lifting from the back of his cart a coop of cackling chickens.

"Arrah! ye blasted Kerryonian!" replied the handsome fellow, depositing the coop on the curb and straightening his tall, slender figure; "I wer jist thinkin' av yez and the ducks, and here yez come quackin' into the prisence of r'yalty, wid yer canvasback suit upon yez and the shwim-skins bechuxt yer toes! How air yez, anyhow—and air we startin' for the Kankakee by the nixt post?"

"We're to start just as soon as we get the boys together," said the Major, shaking hands. "The crowd's to be at Andrews's by four, and it's fully that now; so come on at once. We'll go round by Munson's and have Hi send a boy to look after your horse. Come; and I want to introduce my friend here to you, and we'll all want to smoke and jabber a little in appropriate seclusion. Come on." And the impatient Major had linked arms with his hesitating ally and myself, and was turning the corner of the street.

"It's an hour's work I have yet wid the squawkers," mildly protested Tommy, still hanging back and stepping a trifle high; "but, as wan Irishman would say til another, 'Ye're wrong, but I'm wid ye!'"

And five minutes later the three of us had joined a very jolly party in a snug back room, with

> "The chamber walls depicted all around
> With portraitures of huntsman, hawk, and hound,
> And the hurt deer,"

and where, as well, drifted over the olfactory intelligence a certain subtle, warm-breathed aroma, that genially combated the chill and darkness of the day without, and, resurrecting long-dead Christmases, brimmed the grateful memory with all comfortable cheer.

A dozen hearty voices greeted the appearance of Tommy and the Major, the latter adroitly pushing the jovial Irishman to the front, with a mock-heroic introduction to the general company, at the conclusion of which Tommy, with his hat tucked under the left elbow, stood bowing with a grace of pose and presence Lord Chesterfield might have applauded.

"Gintlemen," said Tommy, settling back upon his heels and admiringly contemplating the group,—"Gintlemen, I congratu-late yez wid a pride that shoves the thumbs av me into the arrumholes av me weshkit! At the inshtigaation av the bowld *O'*Blowney—axin' the gintleman's pardon—I am here wid no silver tongue av illoquence to para-*lyze* yez, but I am prisent, as has been ripresinted, to jine wid yez in a shtupendeous waste av gunpowder,

and duck-shot, and 'high wines,' and ham sandwitches, upon the silvonian banks av the ragin' Kankakee, where the 'di-dipper' tips ye good-bye wid his tail, and the wild loon skoots like a sky-rocket for his exiled home in the alien dunes av the wild morass—or, as Tommy Moore so illegantly dishcribes the blashted birrud,—

'Away to the dizhmal shwamp he shpeeds—
His path is rugged and sore,
Through tangled juniper, beds av reeds,
And many a fen where the serpent feeds,
And birrud niver flew before—
And niver will fly any more'

if iver he arrives back safe into civilization ag'in—and I've been in the poultry business long enough to know the private opinion and personal intigrity av ivery fowl that flies the air or roosts on poles. But, changin' the subject av me few shmall remarks here, and thankin' yez wid an overflowin' heart but a dhry tongue, I have the honor to propose, gintlemen, long life and health to ivery mother's son av yez, and success to the 'Duck-hunters of the Kankakee.'"

"The Duck-hunters of the Kankakee!" chorussed the elated party in such musical uproar that for a full minute the voice of the enthusiastic Major—who was trying to say something—could not be heard. Then he said:

"I want to propose that theme, 'The Duck-hunters of the Kankakee'— for one of Tommy's improvisations. I move we have a song now from Tommy on 'The Duck-hunters of the Kankakee.'"

"Hurrah! hurrah! a song from Tommy!" cried the crowd.—"Make us up a song, and put us all into it! A song from Tommy! A song! A song!"

There was a queer light in the eye of the Irishman. I observed him narrowly—expectantly. Often I had read of this phenomenal art of improvised ballad-singing, but had always remained a little sceptical in regard to the possibility of such a feat. Even in the notable instances of this gift as displayed by the very clever Theodore Hook, I had always half suspected some prior preparation —some adroit forecasting of the sequence that seemed the instant inspiration of his witty verses. Here was evidently to be a test example, and I was all alert to mark its minutest detail.

The clamor had subsided, and Tommy had drawn a chair near to and directly fronting the Major's. His right hand was extended, closely clasping the right hand of his friend, which he scarce perceptibly, though measuredly, lifted and let fall throughout the length of all the curious performance. The voice was not unmusical, nor was the quaint old ballad-air adopted by

the singer unlovely in the least; simply a monotony was evident that accorded with the levity and chance finish of the improvisation—and that the song was improvised on the instant I am certain—though in no wise remarkable, for other reasons, in rhythmic worth or finish. And while his smiling auditors all drew nearer, and leaned with parted lips to catch every syllable, the words of the strange melody trailed unhesitatingly into the lines literally as here subjoined:

"One gloomy day in the airly Fall,
Whin the sunshine had no chance at all—
No chance at all for to gleam and shine
And lighten up this heart of mine:

"'Twas in South Bend, that famous town,
Whilst I wer a-strollin' round and round,
I met some friends, and they says to me:
'It's a hunt we'll take on the Kankakee!'"

"Hurrah for the Kankakee! Give it to us, Tommy!" cried an enthused voice between verses. "Now give it to the *Major!*" And the song went on:

"There's Major Blowney leads the van,
As crack a shot as an Irishman,—
For it's the duck is a tin decoy
That his owld shot-gun can't dishstroy."

And half a dozen jubilant palms patted the Major's shoulders, and his ruddy, good-natured face beamed with delight. "Now give it to the rest of 'em, Tommy!" chuckled the Major. And the song continued:

"And along wid 'Hank' is Mick Maharr,
And Barney Pince, at 'The Shamrock' bar—
There's Barney Pince, wid his heart so true;
And the Andrews Brothers they'll go too."

"Hold on, Tommy!" chipped in one of the Andrewses; "you must give 'the Andrews Brothers' a better advertisement than that! Turn us on a full verse, can't you?"

"Make 'em pay for it if you do!" said the Major, in an undertone. And Tommy promptly amended:

"O, the Andrews Brothers they'll be there,
Wid good se-gyars and wine to shpare,—
They'll treat us here on fine champagne,
And whin we're there they'll treat us again."

The applause here was vociferous, and only discontinued when a box of Havanas stood open on the table. During the momentary lull thus occasioned, I caught the Major's twinkling eyes glancing evasively toward me, as he leaned whispering some further instructions to Tommy, who again took up his desultory ballad, while I turned and fled for the street, catching, however, as I

went, and high above the laughter of the crowd, the satire of this quatrain to its latest line:

"But R-R-Riley he'll not go, I guess,
Lest he'd get losht in the wil-der-ness,
And so in the city he will shtop
For to curl his hair in the barber-shop."

It was after six when I reached the hotel, but I had my hair trimmed before I went in to supper. The style of trimming adopted then I still rigidly adhere to, and call it "the Tommy Stafford stubble-crop."

Ten days passed before I again saw the Major. Immediately upon his return—it was late afternoon when I heard of it—I determined to take my evening walk out the long street toward his pleasant home and call upon him there. This I did, and found him in a wholesome state of fatigue, slippers and easy-chair, enjoying his pipe on the piazza. Of course he was overflowing with happy reminiscences of the hunt—the wood-and-water-craft—boats—ambushes—decoys, and tramp, and camp, and so on, without end;—but I wanted to hear him talk of the "Wild Irishman"—Tommy; and I think, too, now, that the sagacious Major secretly read my desires all the time. To be utterly frank with the reader, I will admit that I not only think the Major divined my interest in Tommy, but I know he did; for at last, as though

reading my very thoughts, he abruptly said, after a long pause, in which he knocked the ashes from his pipe and refilled and lighted it:—"Well, all I know of the 'Wild Irishman' I can tell you in a very few words—that is, if you care at all to listen?" And the crafty old Major seemed to hesitate.

"Go on—go on!" I said, eagerly.

"About forty years ago," resumed the Major, placidly, "in the little, old, unheard-of town Karnteel, County Tyrone, Province Ulster, Ireland, Tommy Stafford—in spite of the contrary opinion of his wretchedly poor parents—was fortunate enough to be born. And here, again, as I advised you the other day, you must be prepared for constant surprises in the study of Tommy's character."

"Go on," I said; "I'm prepared for anything."

The Major smiled profoundly and continued:

"Fifteen years ago, when he came to America—and the Lord only knows how he got the passage-money—he brought his widowed mother with him here, and has supported, and is still supporting her. Besides," went on the still secretly smiling Major, "the fellow has actually found time, through all his adversities, to pick up quite a smattering of education, here and there—"

"Poor fellow!" I broke in, sympathizingly, "what a pity it is that he couldn't have had such advantages earlier in life!" and as I recalled the broad brogue of the

fellow, together with his careless dress, recognizing beneath it all the native talent and brilliancy of a mind of most uncommon worth, I could not restrain a deep sigh of compassion and regret.

The Major was leaning forward in the gathering dusk, and evidently studying my own face, the expression of which, at that moment, was very grave and solemn, I am sure. He suddenly threw himself backward in his chair, in an uncontrollable burst of laughter. "Oh, I just can't keep it up any longer," he exclaimed.

"Keep what up?" I queried, in a perfect maze of bewilderment and surprise. "Keep what up?" I repeated.

"Why, all this twaddle, farce, travesty and by-play regarding Tommy! You know I warned you, over and over, and you mustn't blame me for the deception. I never thought you'd take it so in earnest!" and here the jovial Major again went into convulsions of laughter.

"But I don't understand a word of it all," I cried, half frenzied with the gnarl and tangle of the whole affair. "What 'twaddle, farce and by-play' is it, anyhow?" And in my vexation, I found myself on my feet and striding nervously up and down the paved walk that joined the street with the piazza, pausing at last and confronting the Major almost petulantly. "Please explain," I said, controlling my vexation with an effort.

The Major arose.—"Your striding up and down there

reminds me that a little stroll on the street might do us both good," he said. "Will you wait until I get a coat and hat?"

He rejoined me a moment later, and we passed through the open gate; and saying, "Let's go down this way," he took my arm and turned into a street where, cooling as the dusk was, the thick maples lining the walk seemed to throw a special shade of tranquillity upon us.

"What I meant was," began the Major, in low, serious voice,—"What I meant was—simply this: Our friend Tommy, though the truest Irishman in the world, is a man quite the opposite every way of the character he has appeared to you. All that rich brogue of his is assumed. Though poor, as I told you, when he came here, his native quickness, and his marvellous resources, tact, judgment, business qualities—all have helped him to the equivalent of a liberal education. His love of the humorous and the ridiculous is unbounded; but he has serious moments, as well, and at such times is as dignified and refined in speech and manner as any man you'd find in a thousand. He is a good speaker, can stir a political convention to fomentation when he gets fired up, and can write an article for the press that goes spang to the spot. He gets into a great many personal encounters of a rather undignified character; but they

are almost invariably bred of his innate interest in the 'under dog,' and the fire-and-tow of his impetuous nature."

My companion had paused here, and was looking through some printed slips in his pocket-book. "I wanted you to see some of the fellow's articles in print, but I have nothing of importance here—only some of his 'doggerel,' as he calls it, and you've had a sample of that. But here's a bit of the upper spirit of the man—and still another that you should hear him recite. You can keep them both if you care to.—The boys all fell in love with that last one, particularly, hearing his rendition of it. So we had a lot printed, and I have two or three left. Put these two in your pocket and read at your leisure."

But I read them there and then, as eagerly, too, as I append them here and now. The first is called

SAYS HE

"Whatever the weather may be," says he—
"Whatever the weather may be,
It's plaze, if ye will, an' I'll say me say,—
Supposin' to-day was the winterest day,
Wud the weather be changin' because ye cried,
Or the snow be grass were ye crucified?

The best is to make yer own summer," says he,
"Whatever the weather may be," says he—
"Whatever the weather may be!

"Whatever the weather may be," says he—
"Whatever the weather may be,
It's the songs ye sing, an' the smiles ye wear,
That's a-makin' the sun shine iverywhere;
An' the worrld av gloom is a worrld av glee,
Wid the birrd in the bush, an' the bud in the tree,
An' the fruit on the stim av the bough," says he,
"Whatever the weather may be," says he—
"Whatever the weather may be!

"Whatever the weather may be," says he—
"Whatever the weather may be,
Ye can bring the Spring, wid its green an' gold,
An' the grass in the grove where the snow lies cold;
An' ye'll warm yer back, wid a smilin' face,
As ye sit at yer heart like an owld fireplace,
An' toast the toes av yer soul," says he,
"Whatever the weather may be," says he—
"Whatever the weather may be!"

"Now," said the Major, peering eagerly above my shoulder, "go on with the next. To my liking, it is even better than the first. A type of character you'll recog-

nize.—The same 'broth of a boy,' only *Americanized*, don't you know."

And I read the scrap entitled

CHAIRLEY BURKE

It's Chairley Burke's in town, b'ys! He's down til "Jamesy's Place,"
Wid a bran'-new shave upon 'um, an' the fhwhuskers aff his face;
He's quit the Section-Gang last night, an' yez can chalk it down
There's goin' to be the divil's toime, since Chairley Burke's in town!

It's treatin' iv'ry b'y he is, an' poundin' on the bar
Till iv'ry man he's drinkin' wid musht shmoke a foine cigar;
An' Missus Murphy's little Kate, that's coomin' there for beer,
Can't pay wan cint the bucketful, the whilst that Chairley's here!

He's joompin' oor the tops av shtools, the both forninsht an' back!
He'll lave yez pick the blessed flure, an' walk the straightest crack!
He's liftin' barrels wid his teeth, an' singin' "Garry Owen,"
Till all the house be shtrikin' hands, since Chairley Burke's in town.

The Road-Yaird hands coomes dhroppin' in, an' niver goin' back;
An' there's two freights upon the switch—the wan on aither track—
An' Mr. Gearry, from The Shops, he's mad enough to shwear,
An' durstn't spake a word but grin, the whilst that Chairley's there!

Och! Chairley! Chairley! Chairley Burke! ye divil, wid yer ways
Av dhrivin' all the throubles aff, these dhark an' ghloomy days!
Ohone! that it's meself, wid all the graifs I have to dhrown,
Must lave me pick to resht a bit, since Chairley Burke's in town!

"Before we turn back, now," said the smiling Major, as I stood lingering over the indefinable humor of the last refrain—"before we turn back I want to show you something eminently characteristic. Come this way a half-dozen steps."

As he spoke I looked up, first to observe that we had paused before a handsome square brick residence, centring a beautiful smooth lawn, its emerald only littered with the light gold of the earliest autumn leaves. On either side of the trim walk that led up from the gate to the carved stone balusters of the broad piazza, with its empty easy-chairs, were graceful vases, frothing over with late blossoms, and wreathed with laurel-looking

vines; and, luxuriantly lacing the border of the pave that turned the farther corner of the house, blue, white and crimson, pink and violet, went fading in perspective as my gaze followed the gesture of the Major's.

"Here, come a little farther.—Now do you see that man there?"

Yes, I could make out a figure in the deepening dusk —the figure of a man on the back stoop—a tired-looking man, in his shirt-sleeves, who sat upon a low chair—no, not a chair—an empty box. He was leaning forward with his elbows on his knees, and the hands dropped limp. He was smoking, too; I could barely see his pipe, and but for the odor of very strong tobacco, would not have known he had a pipe. "Why does the master of the house permit his servants to so desecrate this beautiful home?" I thought.

"Well, shall we go now?" said the Major.

I turned silently, and we retraced our steps. I think neither of us spoke for the distance of a square.

"Guess you didn't know the man there on the back porch?" said the Major.

"No; why?" I asked, dubiously.

"I hardly thought you would, and besides the poor fellow's tired, and it was best not to disturb him," said the Major.

"Why, who was it—some one I know?"

"It was Tommy."

"Oh," said I, inquiringly, "he's employed there in some capacity?"

"Yes, as master of the house."

"You don't mean it?"

"I certainly do. He owns it, and made every cent of the money that paid for it!" said the Major, proudly. "That's why I wanted you particularly to note that 'eminent characteristic' I spoke of. Tommy could just as well be sitting, with a fine cigar, on the front piazza, in an easy-chair, as, with his dudeen, on the back porch, on an empty box, where every night you'll find him. It's the unconscious dropping back into the old ways of his father, and his father's father, and his father's father's father. In brief, he sits there the poor lorn symbol of the long oppression of his race."

RAGWEED AND FENNEL

WHEN MY DREAMS COME TRUE

I

When my dreams come true—when my dreams come
true—
Shall I lean from out my casement, in the starlight and
the dew,
To listen—smile and listen to the tinkle of the strings
Of the sweet guitar my lover's fingers fondle, as he sings?
And as the nude moon slowly, slowly shoulders into view,
Shall I vanish from his vision—when my dreams come
true?

When my dreams come true—shall the simple gown I
wear
Be changed to softest satin, and my maiden-braided hair
Be ravelled into flossy mists of rarest, fairest gold,
To be minted into kisses, more than any heart can
hold?—

Or "the summer of my tresses" shall my lover liken to
"The fervor of his passion"—when my dreams come
true?

II

When my dreams come true—I shall bide among the
sheaves
Of happy harvest meadows; and the grasses and the
leaves
Shall lift and lean between me and the splendor of the
sun,
Till the noon swoons into twilight, and the gleaners'
work is done—
Save that yet an arm shall bind me, even as the reapers do
The meanest sheaf of harvest—when my dreams come
true.

When my dreams come true! when my dreams come
true!
True love, in all simplicity, is fresh and pure as dew;—
The blossom in the blackest mould is kindlier to the eye
Than any lily born of pride that looms against the sky:
And so it is I know my heart will gladly welcome you,
My lowliest of lovers, when my dreams come true.

THE BAT

I

THOU dread, uncanny thing,
With fuzzy breast and leathern wing,
In mad, zigzagging flight,
Notching the dusk, and buffeting
The black cheeks of the night,
With grim delight!

II

What witch's hand unhasps
Thy keen claw-cornered wings
From under the barn roof, and flings
Thee forth, with chattering gasps,
To scud the air,
And nip the ladybug, and tear
Her children's hearts out unaware?

III

The glow-worm's glimmer, and the bright,
Sad pulsings of the firefly's light,
  Are banquet-lights to thee.
O less than bird, and worse than beast,
Thou Devil's self, or brat, at least,
  Grate not thy teeth at me!

THE DRUM

O THE drum!
There is some
Intonation in thy grum
Monotony of utterance that strikes the spirit dumb,
As we hear,
Through the clear
And unclouded atmosphere,
Thy palpitating syllables roll in upon the ear!

There's a part
Of the art
Of thy music-throbbing heart
That thrills a something in us that awakens with a start,
And in rhyme
With the chime
And exactitude of time,
Goes marching on to glory to thy melody sublime.

And the guest
Of the breast
That thy rolling robs of rest
Is a patriotic spirit as a Continental dressed;
And he looms
From the glooms
Of a century of tombs,
And the blood he spilled at Lexington in living beauty blooms.

And his eyes
Wear the guise
Of a purpose pure and wise,
As the love of them is lifted to a something in the skies
That is bright
Red and white,
With a blur of starry light,
As it laughs in silken ripples to the breezes day and night.

There are deep
Hushes creep
O'er the pulses as they leap,
As thy tumult, fainter growing, on the silence falls asleep,

While the prayer
Rising there
Wills the sea and earth and air
As a heritage to Freedom's sons and daughters everywhere.

Then, with sound
As profound
As the thunderings resound,
Come thy wild reverberations in a throe that shakes the ground,
And a cry
Flung on high,
Like the flag it flutters by,
Wings rapturously upward till it nestles in the sky.

O the drum!
There is some
Intonation in thy grum
Monotony of utterance that strikes the spirit dumb,
As we hear,
Through the clear
And unclouded atmosphere,
Thy palpitating syllables roll in upon the ear!

TOM JOHNSON'S QUIT

[*Blue Ribbon Crusade*—1872]

A PASSEL o' the boys last night—
And me amongst 'em—kindo' got
To talkin' Temper'nce left and right,
And workin' up "Blue Ribbon," *hot;*
And while we was a-countin' jes
How many had gone into hit
And signed the pledge, some feller says,—
"*Tom Johnson's* quit!"

We laughed, of course—'cause Tom, you know
He's spiled more whiskey, boy and man,
And seed more trouble, high and low,
Than any chap but Tom could stand:
And so, says I, "*He's* too nigh dead
Fer Temper'nce to benefit!"
The feller sighed ag'in, and said—
"Tom Johnson's *quit!*"

We all *liked* Tom, and that was why
  We sorto' simmered down ag'in,
And ast the feller ser'ously
  Ef he wa'n't tryin' to draw us in;
He shuk his head—tuk off his hat—
  Helt up his hand and opened hit,
And says, says he, "I'll *swear* to that—
    Tom Johnson's quit!"

Well, we was stumpt, and tickled too,—
  Because we knowed ef Tom *had* signed
Ther' wa'n't no man 'at wore the "blue"
  'At was more honester inclined:
And then and there we kindo' riz—
  The hull durn gang of us 'at bit—
And th'owed our hats and let 'er whizz,—
    "*Tom Johnson's quit!*"

I've heerd 'em holler when the balls
  Was buzzin' round us wuss'n bees,
And when the ole flag on the walls
  Was flappin' o'er the enemy's,—
I've heerd a-many a wild "hooray"
  'At made my heart git up and git—
But Lord!—to hear 'em shout that way!—
    "*Tom Johnson's quit!*"

Yit when we saw the chap 'at fetched
The news wa'n't jinin' in the cheer,
But stood there solemn-like, and retched
An' kindo' swiped away a tear,
We someway sorto' stilled ag'in,
And listened—I kin hear him yit,
His voice a-wobblin' with his chin,—
"Tom Johnson's quit—

"I hain't a-givin' you no game—
I wisht I was! . . . An hour ago,
This operator—what's his name—
The one 'at works at night, you know?—
Went out to flag that Ten Express,
And sees a man in front of hit
Th'ow up his hands and stagger . . . Yes,—
Tom Johnson's quit."

LULLABY

THE maple strews the embers of its leaves
O'er the laggard swallows nestled 'neath the eaves;
And the moody cricket falters in his cry—Baby-bye!—
And the lid of night is falling o'er the sky—Baby-bye!—
The lid of night is falling o'er the sky!

The rose is lying pallid, and the cup
Of the frosted calla-lily folded up;
And the breezes through the garden sob and sigh—
Baby-bye!—
O'er the sleeping blooms of Summer where they lie—
Baby-bye!—
O'er the sleeping blooms of summer where they lie!

Yet, Baby—O my Baby, for your sake
This heart of mine is ever wide awake,
And my love may never droop a drowsy eye—Baby-bye!—
Till your own are wet above me when I die—Baby-bye!—
Till your own are wet above me when I die.

IN THE SOUTH

THERE is a princess in the South
About whose beauty rumors hum
Like honey-bees about the mouth
Of roses dewdrops falter from;
And O her hair is like the fine
Clear amber of a jostled wine
In tropic revels; and her eyes
Are blue as rifts of Paradise.

Such beauty as may none before
Kneel daringly, to kiss the tips
Of fingers such as knights of yore
Had died to lift against their lips:
Such eyes as might the eyes of gold
Of all the stars of night behold
With glittering envy, and so glare
In dazzling splendor of despair.

So, were I but a minstrel, deft
At weaving, with the trembling strings
Of my glad harp, the warp and weft
Of rondels such as rapture sings,—
I'd loop my lyre across my breast,
Nor stay me till my knee found rest
In midnight banks of bud and flower
Beneath my lady's lattice-bower.

And there, drenched with the teary dews,
I'd woo her with such wondrous art
As well might stanch the songs that ooze
Out of the mock-bird's breaking heart;
So light, so tender, and so sweet
Should be the words I would repeat,
Her casement, on my gradual sight,
Would blossom as a lily might.

A LEAVE-TAKING

SHE will not smile;
  She will not stir:
I marvel while
  I look on her.
    The lips are chilly
      And will not speak;
    The ghost of a lily
      In either cheek.

Her hair—ah me!—
  Her hair—her hair!
How helplessly
  My hands go there!
    But my caresses
      Meet not hers,
    O golden tresses
      That thread my tears!

I kiss the eyes
  On either lid,
Where her love lies
  Forever hid.
    I cease my weeping
      And smile and say:
    I shall be sleeping
      Thus, some day!

WAIT FOR THE MORNING

WAIT for the morning:—It will come, indeed,
As surely as the night hath given need.
The yearning eyes, at last, will strain their sight
No more unanswered by the morning light;
No longer will they vainly strive, through tears,
To pierce the darkness of thy doubts and fears,
But, bathed in balmy dews and rays of dawn,
Will smile with rapture o'er the darkness drawn.

Wait for the morning, O thou smitten child,
Scorned, scourged and persecuted and reviled—
Athirst and famishing, none pitying thee,
Crowned with the twisted thorns of agony—
No faintest gleam of sunlight through the dense
Infinity of gloom to lead thee thence.—
Wait for the morning:—It will come, indeed,
As surely as the night hath given need.

WHEN JUNE IS HERE

WHEN June is here—what art have we to sing
The whiteness of the lilies 'midst the green
Of noon-tranced lawns? or flash of roses seen
Like redbirds' wings? or earliest ripening
Prince-Harvest apples, where the cloyed bees cling
Round winy juices oozing down between
The peckings of the robin, while we lean
In under-grasses, lost in marvelling;
Or the cool term of morning, and the stir
Of odorous breaths from wood and meadow walks;
The Bob-white's liquid yodel, and the whir
Of sudden flight; and, where the milkmaid talks
Across the bars, on tilted barley-stalks
The dewdrops' glint in webs of gossamer.

THE GILDED ROLL

THE GILDED ROLL

NOSING around in an old box—packed away, and lost to memory for years—an hour ago I found a musty package of gilt paper, or rather a roll it was, with the green-tarnished gold of the old sheet for the outer wrapper. I picked it up mechanically, to toss it into some obscure corner, when, carelessly lifting it by one end, a child's tin-whistle dropped therefrom and fell tinkling on the attic floor. It lies before me on my writing-table now—and so, too, does the roll entire, though now a roll no longer,—for my eager fingers have unrolled the gilded covering, and all its precious contents are spread out beneath my hungry eyes.

Here is a scroll of ink-written music. I don't read music, but I know the dash and swing of the pen that rained it on the page. Here is a letter, with the selfsame impulse and abandon in every syllable; and its melody, however sweet the other, is far more sweet to me. And

here are other letters like it—three—five—and seven, at least. Bob wrote them from the front, and Billy kept them for me when I went to join him. Dear boy! Dear boy!

Here are some cards of Bristol-board. Ah! when Bob came to these there were no blotches then! What faces—what expressions! The droll, ridiculous, good-for-nothing genius, with his "sad mouth," as he called it, "upside down,"—laughing always—at everything, at big rallies, and mass meetings and conventions, county fairs, and floral halls, booths, watermelon-wagons, dancing-tents, the swing, Daguerrean car, the "lung barometer," and the air-gun man! Oh! what a gifted, good-for-nothing boy Bob was in those old days! And here's a picture of a girlish face—a very faded photograph—even fresh from "the gallery," five and twenty years ago, it was a faded thing. But the living face—how bright and clear that was!—for "Doc," Bob's awful name for her, was a pretty girl, and brilliant, clever, lovable every way. No wonder Bob fancied her! And you could see some hint of her jaunty loveliness in every fairy face he drew, and you could find her happy ways and dainty tastes unconsciously assumed in all he did—the books he read—the poems he admired, and those he wrote; and, ringing clear and pure and jubilant, the vibrant beauty of her voice

could clearly be defined and traced through all his music. Now, there's the happy pair of them—Bob and Doc. Make of them just whatever your good fancy may dictate, but keep in mind the stern, relentless ways of destiny.

You are not at the beginning of a novel, only at the threshold of one of a hundred experiences that lie buried in the past, and this particular one most happily resurrected by these odds and ends found in the gilded roll.

You see, dating away back, the contents of this package, mainly, were hastily gathered together after a week's visit out at the old Mills farm; the gilt paper, and the whistle, and the pictures, they were Billy's; the music-pages, Bob's, or Doc's; the letters and some other manuscripts were mine.

The Mills girls were great friends of Doc's, and often came to visit her in town; and so Doc often visited the Millses. This is the way that Bob first got out there, and won them all, and "shaped the thing" for me, as he would put it; and lastly, we had lugged in Billy,—such a handy boy, you know, to hold the horses on picnic excursions, and to watch the carriage and the luncheon, and all that.—"Yes, and," Bob would say, "such a serviceable boy in getting all the fishing-tackle in proper order, and digging bait, and promenading in our wake

up and down the creek all day, with the minnow-bucket hanging on his arm, don't you know!"

But jolly as the days were, I think jollier were the long evenings at the farm. After the supper in the grove, where, when the weather permitted, always stood the table, ankle-deep in the cool green plush of the sward; and after the lounge upon the grass, and the cigars, and the new fish-stories, and the general invoice of the old ones, it was delectable to get back to the girls again, and in the old "best room" hear once more the lilt of the old songs and the staccatoed laughter of the piano mingling with the alto and falsetto voices of the Mills girls, and the gallant soprano of the dear girl Doc.

This is the scene I want you to look in upon, as, in fancy, I do now—and here are the materials for it all, husked from the gilded roll:

Bob, the master, leans at the piano now, and Doc is at the keys, her glad face often thrown up sidewise toward his own. His face is boyish—for there is yet but the ghost of a mustache upon his lip. His eyes are dark and clear, of oversize when looking at you, but now their lids are drooped above his violin, whose melody has, for the time, almost smoothed away the upward kinkings of the corners of his mouth. And wonderfully quiet now is every one, and the chords of the piano, too, are low and

faltering; and so, at last, the tune itself swoons into the universal hush, and—Bob is rasping, in its stead, the ridiculous, but marvellously perfect, imitation of the "priming" of a pump, while Billy's hands forget the "chiggers" on the bare backs of his feet, as, with clapping palms, he dances round the room in ungovernable spasms of delight. And then we all laugh; and Billy, taking advantage of the general tumult, pulls Bob's head down and whispers, "Git 'em to stay up 'way late to-night!" And Bob, perhaps remembering that we go back home to-morrow, winks at the little fellow and whispers, "You let me manage 'em!—Stay up till broad daylight if we take a notion—eh?" And Billy dances off again in newer glee, while the inspired musician is plunking a banjo imitation on his enchanted instrument, which is unceremoniously drowned out by a circus tune from Doc that is absolutely inspiring to every one but the barefooted brother, who drops back listlessly to his old position on the floor and sullenly renews operations on his "chigger" claims.

"Thought you was goin' to have pop-corn to-night all so fast!" he says, doggedly, in the midst of a momentary lull that has fallen on a game of whist. And then the oldest Mills girl, who thinks cards stupid anyhow, says: "That's so, Billy; and we're going to have it, too; and

right away, for this game's just ending, and I sha'n't submit to being bored with another. I say 'Pop-corn' with Billy! And after that," she continues, rising and addressing the party in general, "we must have another literary and artistic tournament, and that's been in contemplation and preparation long enough; so you gentlemen can be pulling your wits together for the exercises, while we girls see to the refreshments."

"Have you done anything toward it?" queries Bob, when the girls are gone, with the alert Billy in their wake.

"Just an outline," I reply. "How with you?"

"Clean forgot it—that is, the preparation; but I've got a little old second-hand idea, if you'll all help me out with it, that'll amuse us some, and tickle *Billy*, I'm certain."

So that's agreed upon; and while Bob produces his portfolio, drawing-paper, pencils and so on, I turn to my note-book in a dazed way and begin counting my fingers in a depth of profound abstraction, from which I am barely aroused by the reappearance of the girls and Billy.

"Goody, goody, goody! Bob's goin' to make pictures!" cries Billy, in additional transport to that the pop-corn has produced.

"Now, you girls," says Bob, gently detaching the affectionate Billy from one leg and moving a chair to the table, with a backward glance of intelligence toward

the boy,—"you girls are to help us all you can, and we can all work; but, as I'll have all the illustrations to do, I want you to do as many of the verses as you can—that'll be easy, you know,—because the work entire is just to consist of a series of fool-epigrams, such as, for instance.—Listen, Billy:

Here lies a young man
Who in childhood began
To swear, and to smoke, and to drink,—
In his twentieth year
He quit swearing and beer,
And yet is still smoking, I think."

And the rest of his instructions are delivered in lower tones, that the boy may not hear; and then, all matters seemingly arranged, he turns to the boy with—"And now, Billy, no lookin' over shoulders, you know, or swingin' on my chair-back while I'm at work. When the pictures are all finished, then you can take a squint at 'em, and not before. Is that all hunky, now?"

"Oh! who's a-goin' to look over your shoulder—only *Doc*." And as the radiant Doc hastily quits that very post, and dives for the offending brother, he scrambles under the piano and laughs derisively.

And then a silence falls upon the group—a gracious

quiet, only intruded upon by the very juicy and exuberant munching of an apple from a remote fastness of the room, and the occasional thumping of a bare heel against the floor.

At last I close my note-book with a half-slam.

"That means," says Bob, laying down his pencil, and addressing the girls,—"that means he's concluded his poem, and that he's not pleased with it in any manner, and that he intends declining to read it, for that self-acknowledged reason, and that he expects us to believe every affected word of his entire speech—"

"Oh, don't!" I exclaim.

"Then give us the wretched production, in all its hideous deformity!"

And the girls all laugh so sympathetically, and Bob joins them so gently, and yet with a tone, I know, that can be changed so quickly to my further discomfiture, that I arise at once and read, without apology or excuse, this primitive and very callow poem recovered here to-day from the gilded roll:

A BACKWARD LOOK

As I sat smoking, alone, yesterday,
And lazily leaning back in my chair,
Enjoying myself in a general way—
Allowing my thoughts a holiday

From weariness, toil and care,—
My fancies—doubtless, for ventilation—
Left ajar the gates of my mind,—
And Memory, seeing the situation,
Slipped out in street of "Auld Lang Syne."

Wandering ever with tireless feet
Through scenes of silence, and jubilee
Of long-hushed voices; and faces sweet
Were thronging the shadowy side of the street
As far as the eye could see;
Dreaming again, in anticipation,
The same old dreams of our boyhood's days
That never come true, from the vague sensation
Of walking asleep in the world's strange ways.

Away to the house where I was born!
And there was the selfsame clock that ticked
From the close of dusk to the burst of morn,
When life-warm hands plucked the golden corn
And helped when the apples were picked.
And the "chany dog" on the mantel-shelf,
With the gilded collar and yellow eyes,
Looked just as at first, when I hugged myself
Sound asleep with the dear surprise.

And down to the swing in the locust-tree,
Where the grass was worn from the trampled ground,
And where "Eck" Skinner, "Old" Carr, and three
Or four such other boys used to be

"Doin' sky-scrapers," or "whirlin' round":
And again Bob climbed for the bluebird's nest,
And again "had shows" in the buggy-shed
Of Guymon's barn, where still, unguessed,
The old ghosts romp through the best days dead!

And again I gazed from the old schoolroom
With a wistful look, of a long June day,
When on my cheek was the hectic bloom
Caught of Mischief, as I presume—
He had such a "partial" way,
It seemed, toward me.—And again I thought
Of a probable likelihood to be
Kept in after school—for a girl was caught
Catching a note from me.

And down through the woods to the swimming-hole—
Where the big, white, hollow old sycamore grows,—
And we never cared when the water was cold,
And always "ducked" the boy that told
On the fellow that tied the clothes.—
When life went so like a dreamy rhyme,
That it seems to me now that then
The world was having a jollier time
Than it ever will have again.

The crude production is received, I am glad to note, with some expressions of favor from the company, though

Bob, of course, must heartlessly dissipate my weak delight by saying, "Well, it's certainly *bad* enough; though," he goes on, with an air of deepest critical sagacity and fairness, "considered, as it should be, justly, as the production of a jour.-poet, why, it might be worse—that is, a *little* worse."

"Probably," I remember saying,—"probably I might redeem myself by reading you this little amateurish bit of verse, enclosed to me in a letter by mistake, not very long ago." I here fish an envelope from my pocket the address of which all recognize as in Bob's almost printed writing. He smiles vacantly at it—then vividly colors.

"What date?" he stoically asks.

"The date," I suggestively answer, "of your last letter to our dear Doc, at Boarding-School, two days exactly in advance of her coming home—this veritable visit now."

Both Bob and Doc rush at me—but too late. The letter and contents have wholly vanished. The youngest Miss Mills quiets us—urgently distracting us, in fact, by calling our attention to the immediate completion of our joint production; "For now," she says, "with our new reënforcement, we can, with becoming diligence, soon have it ready for both printer and engraver, and then we'll wake up the boy (who has been fortunately slum-

bering for the last quarter of an hour), and present to him, as designed and intended, this matchless creation of our united intellects." At the conclusion of this speech we all go good-humoredly to work, and at the close of half an hour the tedious, but most ridiculous, task is announced completed.

As I arrange and place in proper form here on the table the separate cards—twenty-seven in number—I sigh to think that I am unable to transcribe for you the best part of the nonsensical work—the illustrations. All I can give is the written copy of

BILLY'S ALPHABETICAL ANIMAL SHOW

A was an elegant Ape
Who tied up his ears with red tape,
And wore a long veil
Half revealing his tail,
Which was trimmed with jet bugles and crape.

B was a boastful old Bear
Who used to say,—"Hoomh! I declare
I can eat—if you'll get me
The children, and let me—
Ten babies, teeth, toe-nails and hair!"

C was a Codfish who sighed
When snatched from the home of his pride,
But could he, embrined,
Guess this fragrance behind,
How glad he would be that he died!

D was a dandified Dog
Who said,—"Though it's raining like fog
I wear no umbrellah,
Me boy, for a fellah
Might just as well travel incog!"

E was an elderly Eel
Who would say,—"Well, I really feel—
As my grandchildren wriggle
And shout, 'I should giggle'—
A trifle run down at the heel!"

F was a Fowl who conceded
Some hens might hatch more eggs than *she* did,—
But she'd children as plenty
As eighteen or twenty,
And that was quite all that she needed.

G was a gluttonous Goat
Who, dining one day, *table-d'hôte*,
Ordered soup-bone, *au fait*,
And fish, *papier-mâché*,
And a *filet* of Spring-overcoat.

H was a high-cultured Hound
Who could clear forty feet at a bound,
And a coon once averred
That his howl could be heard
For five miles and three quarters around.

I was an Ibex ambitious
To dive over chasms auspicious;
He would leap down a peak
And not light for a week,
And swear that the jump was delicious.

J was a Jackass who said
He had such a bad cold in his head,
If it wasn't for leaving
The rest of us grieving,
He'd really rather be dead.

K was a profligate Kite
Who would haunt the saloons every night;
And often he ust
To reel back to his roost
Too full to set up on it right.

L was a wary old Lynx
Who would say, — "Do you know wot I thinks? —
I thinks ef you happen
To ketch me a-nappin'
I'm ready to set up the drinks!"

M was a merry old Mole
Who would snooze all the day in his hole,
Then—all night, a-rootin'
Around and galootin'—
He'd sing "Johnny, Fill up the Bowl!"

N was a caustical Nautilus
Who sneered,—"I suppose, when they've *eaught* all us,
Like oysters they'll serve us,
And can us, preserve us,
And barrel, and pickle, and bottle us!"

O was an autocrat Owl—
Such a wise—such a wonderful fowl!
Why, for all the night through
He would hoot and hoo-hoo,
And hoot and hoo-hooter and howl!

P was a Pelican pet
Who gobbled up all he could get;
He could eat on until
He was full to the bill,
And there he had lodgings to let!

Q was a querulous Quail
Who said,—"It will little avail
The efforts of those
Of my foes who propose
To attempt to put salt on my tail!"

R was a ring-tailed Raccoon,
With eyes of the tinge of the moon,
And his nose a blue-black,
And the fur on his back
A sad sort of sallow marroon.

S is a Sculpin—you'll wish
Very much to have one on your dish,
Since all his bones grow
On the outside, and so
He's a very desirable fish.

T was a Turtle, of wealth,
Who went round with particular stealth,—
"Why," said he, "I'm afraid
Of being waylaid
When I even walk out for my health!"

U was a Unicorn curious,
With one horn, of a growth so *luxurious*,
He could level and stab it—
If you didn't grab it—
Clean through you, he was so blamed furious!

V was a vagabond Vulture
Who said,—"I don't want to insult yer,
But when you intrude
Where in lone solitude
I'm a-*preyin'*, you're no man o' culture!"

W WAS a wild *Wood*chuck,
And you can just bet that he *could* "chuck"—
He'd eat raw potatoes,
Green corn, and tomatoes,
And tree-roots, and call it all "*good* chuck!"

X WAS a kind of X-cuse
Of a some-sort-o'-thing that got loose
Before we could name it,
And cage it, and tame it,
And bring it in general use.

Y IS the Yellowbird,—bright
As a petrified lump of starlight,
Or a handful of lightning-
Bugs, squeezed in the tight'ning
Pink fist of a boy, at night.

Z IS the Zebra, of course!—
A kind of a clown-of-a-horse,—
Each other despising,
Yet neither devising
A way to obtain a divorce!

& HERE is the famous—what-is-it?
Walk up, Master Billy, and quiz it:
You've seen the *rest* of 'em—
Ain't this the *best* of 'em,
Right at the end of your visit?

At last Billy is sent off to bed. It is the prudent mandate of the old folks: But so loathfully the poor child goes, Bob's heart goes, too—yes, Bob himself, to keep the little fellow company awhile, and, up there under the old rafters, in the pleasant gloom, lull him to famous dreams with fairy tales. And it is during this brief absence that the youngest Mills girl gives us a surprise. She will read a poem, she says, written by a very dear friend of hers, who, fortunately for us, is not present to prevent her. We guard door and window as she reads. Doc says she will not listen; but she does listen, and cries, too—out of pure vexation, she asserts. The rest of us, however, cry just because of the apparent honesty of the poem of

BEAUTIFUL HANDS

O your hands—they are strangely fair!
Fair—for the jewels that sparkle there,—
Fair—for the witchery of the spell
That ivory keys alone can tell;
But when their delicate touches rest
Here in my own do I love them best,
As I clasp with eager acquisitive spans
My glorious treasure of beautiful hands!

Marvellous—wonderful—beautiful hands!
They can coax roses to bloom in the strands
Of your brown tresses; and ribbons will twine,
Under mysterious touches of thine,
Into such knots as entangle the soul
And fetter the heart under such a control
As only the strength of my love understands—
My passionate love for your beautiful hands.

As I remember the first fair touch
Of those beautiful hands that I love so much,
I seem to thrill as I then was thrilled,
Kissing the glove that I found unfilled—
When I met your gaze, and the queenly bow,
As you said to me, laughingly, "Keep it now!"
And dazed and alone in a dream I stand
Kissing this ghost of your beautiful hand.

When first I loved, in the long ago,
And held your hand as I told you so—
Pressed and caressed it and gave it a kiss,
And said, "I could die for a hand like this!"
Little I dreamed love's fulness yet
Had to ripen when eyes were wet
And prayers were vain in their wild demands
For one warm touch of your beautiful hands.

Beautiful Hands! O Beautiful Hands!
Could you reach out of the alien lands

Where you are lingering, and give me, to-night,
Only a touch—were it ever so light—
My heart were soothed, and my weary brain
Would lull itself into rest again;
For there is no solace the world commands
Like the caress of your beautiful hands.

. . . . . .

Violently winking at the mist that blurs my sight, I regretfully awaken to the here and now. And is it possible, I sorrowfully muse, that all this glory can have fled away?—that more than twenty long, long years are spread between me and that happy night? And is it possible that all the dear old faces—O, quit it! quit it! Gather the old scraps up and wad 'em back into oblivion, where they belong!

Yes, but be calm—be calm! Think of cheerful things. You are not all alone. *Billy's* living yet.

I know—and six feet high—and sag-shouldered—and owns a tin-and-stove store, and can't hear thunder! *Billy!*

And the youngest Mills girl—she's alive, too.

S'pose I don't know that? I married her!

And Doc.—

Bob married *her*. Been in California for more than fifteen years—on some blasted cattle-ranch, or something,—and he's worth half a million! And am I less prosperous with this gilded roll?